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PIONEER

THE HISTORY OF
Sister
Missionaries

PUBLISHED BY THE SONS OF UTAH PIONEERS

Danica B. Root

PIONEER



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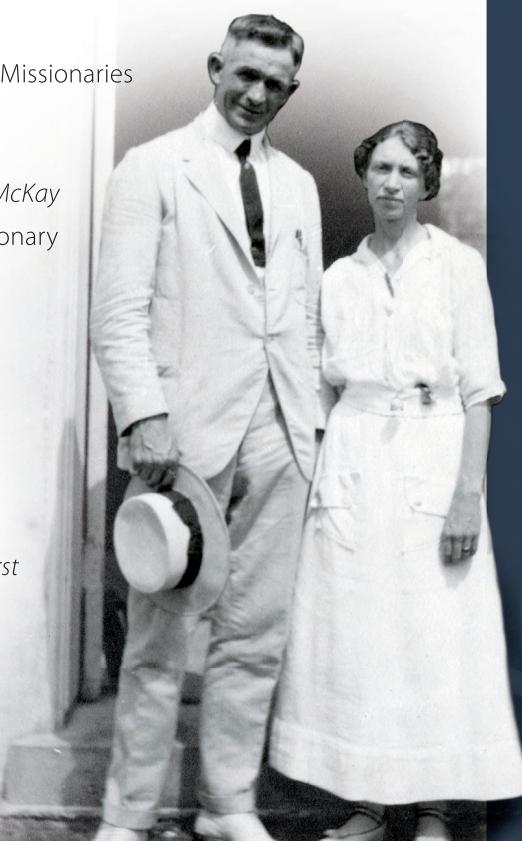
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MISSION STATEMENT: The Mission of the National Society of the Sons of Utah Pioneers is to come to know our fathers and turn our hearts to them; we preserve the memory and heritage of the early pioneers of the Utah Territory and the western U.S.; we honor present-day pioneers worldwide who exemplify the pioneer qualities of character; and teach these same qualities to the youth who will be tomorrow's pioneers.

THE PIONEER VALUES: We honor the pioneers for their faith in God, devotion to family, loyalty to church and country, hard work and service to others, courage in adversity, personal integrity, and unyielding determination.



Jane Danby, born in 1789 in Atwood Bank, Worcester, England, was the first person in the Hurst ancestry to join The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She accepted the gospel in the early days of the Church when the first missionaries arrived in England. Although the specific circumstances of her conversion are not known, the strength of her testimony is. A widow when she heard of the urging of the Prophet to "Come to Zion," she made the difficult decision to leave her home, family and friends and cross the sea to settle in Nauvoo.

Jane's letters home to her children and friends were filled with testimony and glowing descriptions of life among the Saints in Nauvoo, including the blessings of being close to the Prophet and other Church leaders. Her letters eventually convinced two of her daughters, Susannah and Ann, together with their husbands, to investigate the Church. As a result all four (with their children) were baptized in 1843. They began preparations that same year to emigrate to Zion. Susannah's husband was William Hurst, my great-great-grandfather.

As I have read the proofs of this issue of the *Pioneer* I have experienced a new and, for me, exciting awakening. Although it was relatively rare for women to receive calls and be ordained to serve full-time missions prior

to 1898, church history is replete with examples of women serving as "missionaries" in sharing the gospel with family, friends, and neighbors. My awakening was to the full realization that my Great-Great-Grandmother Danby was not only our family's first LDS Church member, but also our first missionary.

My wife Joan interrupted me in mid-thought. "As I think about what you are reading," she said, "I realize that *my* great-great-grandmother was the 'missionary' who brought the gospel to her family as well." Elizabeth Evans Rees was washing clothes in her home in Fishguard, Wales, when she heard singing down the street. She investigated and found Mormon elders preaching the gospel in a street meeting. She listened, was convinced they spoke the truth, and made arrangements for her husband and children to listen to the message. Through her leadership the family joined the church, and leaving behind a prosperous business in Fishguard, they migrated to Zion in 1855. However, Elizabeth's husband, William, became disillusioned when loans he made to fellow Church members were not repaid, and he took his family back to Wales. But Elizabeth's testimony remained intact, and she made the difficult decision to return to Zion with a number of her friends, never to leave again. Her youngest son, Joseph, rejoined his mother the following

year. Joseph Rees is Joan's great-grandfather.

In the following pages you will read of the pioneering activities and progress of sister missionaries from the early 1830s to contemporary times. One "trail marker" of this story is the simple but powerful leadership of women among family and friends.

My wife and I have served missions in the South America South, Europe, and Europe East Areas, working closely with mission presidents and missionaries as Area Mental Health Advisors. We have observed the incredible dedication and productivity of sister missionaries in South America. And we have marvelled at their pioneering strength and perseverance throughout Europe and Russia. These stories are inspirational and often miraculous.

In our two families alone, as the result of those two pioneer "sister missionaries," Jane Danby and Elizabeth Rees, the LDS Church has been enriched with bishops, stake presidents, mission presidents, temple presidents and scores of missionaries, both sisters and elders. As you turn the pages of this issue of *Pioneer*, I hope you will find yourself, as did I, compelled to share with loved ones your new knowledge and perspectives. This history of sister missionaries is a remarkable story. □





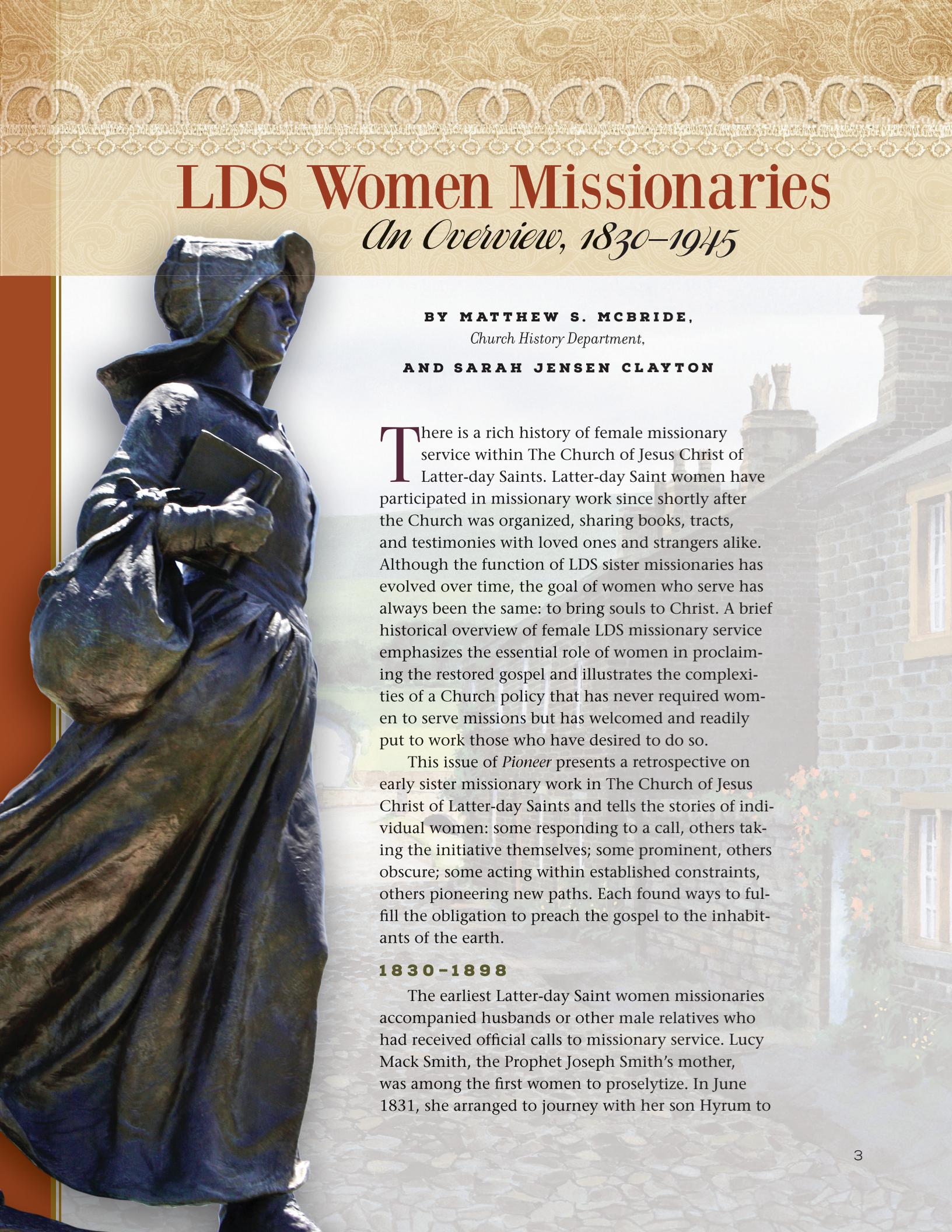
Cobblestones, by Al Rounds

2

*The women are
“preachers . . . and they
carried their sermons to
the homes of rich and
poor, to be read at the
fireside by those who,
but for this, never would
have gone to hear an
elder preach.”*

—EDWARD TULLIDGE
WOMEN OF MORMONDOM

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LDS Women Missionaries

An Overview, 1830–1945

BY MATTHEW S. MCBRIDE,

Church History Department,

AND SARAH JENSEN CLAYTON

There is a rich history of female missionary service within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Latter-day Saint women have participated in missionary work since shortly after the Church was organized, sharing books, tracts, and testimonies with loved ones and strangers alike. Although the function of LDS sister missionaries has evolved over time, the goal of women who serve has always been the same: to bring souls to Christ. A brief historical overview of female LDS missionary service emphasizes the essential role of women in proclaiming the restored gospel and illustrates the complexities of a Church policy that has never required women to serve missions but has welcomed and readily put to work those who have desired to do so.

This issue of *Pioneer* presents a retrospective on early sister missionary work in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and tells the stories of individual women: some responding to a call, others taking the initiative themselves; some prominent, others obscure; some acting within established constraints, others pioneering new paths. Each found ways to fulfill the obligation to preach the gospel to the inhabitants of the earth.

1830–1898

The earliest Latter-day Saint women missionaries accompanied husbands or other male relatives who had received official calls to missionary service. Lucy Mack Smith, the Prophet Joseph Smith's mother, was among the first women to proselytize. In June 1831, she arranged to journey with her son Hyrum to

Pontiac, Michigan, to visit her brother's family and introduce them to the gospel. Accompanied by her niece, Almira Mack, Lucy taught and helped at least three individuals toward conversion.¹ Likewise, Emma Smith often traveled with Joseph as he spread the gospel message.

Lucy's and Emma's experiences show that, from the earliest stages of Church history, women were empowered and authorized to preach the restored gospel. Typically, women's informal missionary activity focused on the conversion of family members. They labored in person as well as by letter, at times offering detailed explanations of their beliefs and testimonies.² Church leaders increasingly encouraged women to cast a wider net. In 1840, Elder Parley P. Pratt wrote, "It is [a woman's] privilege and duty to warn all, both men and women, of what God is doing in these last days, so far as they have the opportunity,—and invite all to come and submit themselves to the gospel of Christ."³

On the whole, however, away-from-home female missionary service was rare between 1830 and the late 1840s. In his pioneering study of LDS female missionary service, Calvin S. Kunz lists fewer than fifteen other women who traveled with male family members called as missionaries before 1850.⁴ This number may be partly explained by the fact the Church was still a fledgling organization with a small membership. It can further be traced to an 1850 directive from Heber C. Kimball, then First Counselor to President Brigham Young, advising elders called to missionary service "to leave their families at home" so that "their minds will be more free to serve the Lord."⁵

Although female missionaries were not officially set apart until 1865, there are records well before then of women receiving blessings or "callings" prior to missionary service. Beginning as early as 1839, Joseph Smith blessed wives departing with their missionary husbands, and in 1850, Louisa Barnes Pratt (who accompanied her husband, Addison, to the Society Islands) recorded in her diary that "Brother [Brigham] Young blessed me" and "said that I was called, set apart, and

ordained to go to the Islands of the sea to aid my husband in teaching the people."⁶

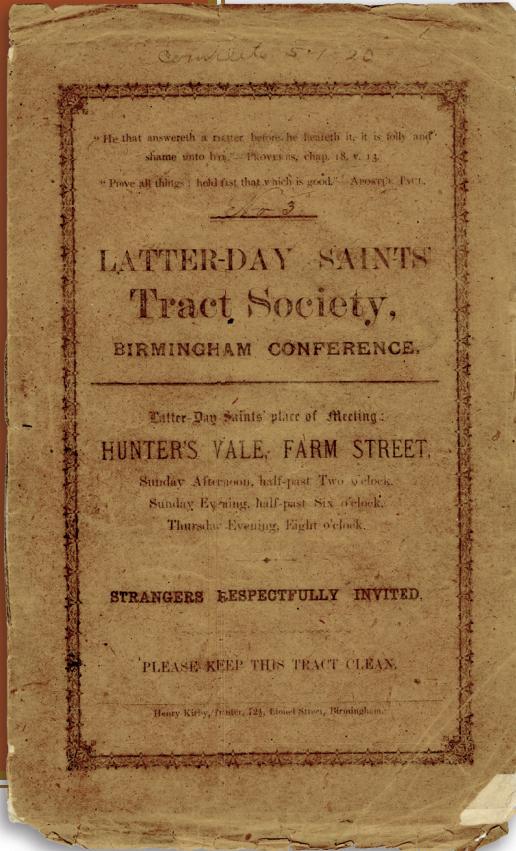
Nevertheless, the majority of the 220 LDS women who spent time in the mission field between 1830 and 1898 (when sister missionaries were first certified) served without being given definitive proselytizing roles or official missionary status.⁷ Those who were missionary spouses generally retained the domestic responsibilities they knew so well—although such work as "writing letters, cleaning house, preparing meals and tending children" often involved recipients well beyond the immediate family.⁸

In the 1840s and 1850s, Latter-day Saint women in Great Britain began to participate more publicly in the Church's missionary endeavor by joining tract societies. Comprised of both men and women, these groups helped distribute pamphlets on various aspects of Latter-day Saint belief and invited recipients to meet and hear the preaching of officially designated missionaries.

Teaching also became a popular activity for early female missionaries. Beginning in 1852, Louisa Barnes Pratt spent nearly every day for a year at an old prayer house in Tahiti "teaching



Comprised of both men and women, tract societies helped distribute pamphlets on various aspects of Latter-day Saint belief and invited recipients to meet and hear the preaching of officially designated missionaries.



the native children in their own language to read and write.” Thirteen years later, in 1865, Mildred E. Randall opened an English language school on the Church-owned plantation at Laie, Hawaii.⁹ Indeed, Randall became the first woman to serve a mission without her husband when, shortly after the school was opened, Randall’s husband Alfred found it necessary to return to Utah. Mildred remained in Laie for a full year as head teacher at the church school. In 1873, she accepted a call to return to Laie and resume teaching while Alfred remained home.

In 1865, thirteen women were called and set apart as missionary companions to their husbands; for the first time in LDS history, the names of these sisters appeared on the official Church roster of full-time missionaries. During the 1870s and 1880s, women’s missionary work took many forms. Some women continued to accompany husbands into the field. Some studied at schools in the East or in Europe, earning degrees in medicine or education;

others were called to do domestic or foreign genealogical research. Still others were called as “home missionaries to teach about Church programs and organizations to other women in distant Utah settlements.”¹⁰

Interestingly, early Church policy regarding the role of women in the mission field—as given by Parley P. Pratt in 1840—was that “women may pray, testify, speak in tongues and prophesy in the Church” as “liberty is given them by the Elders.”¹¹ Then as now, men and women missionaries operated under the direction of presiding priesthood authorities; both women and men were authorized to pray, testify, inspire, and teach.

However, it was only over time that female missionaries were given leadership responsibilities in missions of the Church and, while in the field, were regularly called upon to speak or teach or to expound scripture. It wasn’t until the late 1870s, for example, that, while serving with her husband, Harriet D. Bunting set up the first Relief Society and Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association organizations in the British Mission; and it was during the 1880s that Sarah L. C. Partridge and Elizabeth L. Noall—both wives of missionaries—were asked to serve as Relief Society presidents in their respective missions.¹² Ida L. Roberts, called with her husband in 1897 to the Samoan Islands, was among the first sister missionaries to report doing proselytizing work previously assumed by elders, expressing her “joy in going out tracting from house to house” with her husband.¹³

The fact that idealized sister-missionary roles were slow in reaching fruition may have been tied

to an intriguing traditional division of proselytizing labor. An 1890 article in the *Young Woman's Journal* entitled "Missionary Work for the Girls" repeats the elements of this traditional paradigm. The article opens with these words: "Now, my dear girls, don't jump at the conclusion that we are going to be sent to proclaim the gospel to the nations of the earth. Such is not your mission, but you have a missionary field of vast importance, where your labors, if rightly directed, will be productive of much good." Specifying a young woman's obligation to "yourself," "parents," "the aged," and "the erring sister," the article suggests that women are largely responsible for the growth and health of the domestic Church, neighborhood by neighborhood, while young men are responsible for its growth and health abroad. The article eventually poses the following questions to its readers: "Who shall say that your mission is any less noble and grand than that

of your brothers who proclaim the gospel to the nations of the earth? Are not the souls of those born in Zion, as precious in the Lord's sight, as those who are brought from afar?"¹⁴ While such attitudes continued widespread through the early twentieth century, important changes were underway. As sanctioned polygamy began disappearing in 1890, as educational opportunities for LDS women grew, and as average marriage ages rose, opportunities for single sisters to serve missions would increase dramatically.

1898–1915

From 1879 to 1889, the average number of LDS women called each year to missionary labor was four. Between 1890 and 1898 that number jumped to thirteen.¹⁵ A confluence of organizational factors enabled the expansion of missionary work by LDS women near the close of the nineteenth century. For decades,

Phebe Woodruff

In late spring of 1837, Wilford Woodruff and Jonathan Hale had received calls to serve missions in New England and had departed Kirtland, Ohio, on May 31, 1837. When Jonathan completed his mission and returned to Kirtland on October 9 of that year, Wilford traveled to Scarborough, Maine, to meet his wife—who had recently arrived there from Kirtland to spend time with her extended family.

On October 28, 1837, Wilford and Phebe left Scarborough, going first to Portland, Maine, and then on to Bangor. From Bangor they sailed to the Fox Islands off the Maine coast. She was initially there with her husband for about two weeks before returning to her parents' home in Scarborough. During the next five and a half months, she occasionally spent a week or two with her husband, accompanying him



in his circuits of the islands. The last of Phebe's trips to the islands ended on April 17, 1838. Wilford left the islands for an extended period on April 28, arranging for Phebe to remain with her parents while he spent time in Connecticut with his family, teaching and then baptizing as-yet unconverted family members. During the winter of 1838–39, and accompanied by 53 Fox Island converts, Wilford and Phebe slowly made their way westward, intending to join the main body of Saints in Missouri. But they had made it only as far as central Illinois when they realized that the Saints were being driven eastward from Missouri into Illinois and Iowa. Wilford and Phebe initially settled in Fort Madison, Iowa, and then in Nauvoo, Illinois.

Following the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith and the assumption of Church leadership by

Church and Relief Society leaders had encouraged women to participate in the public sphere. As the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary organizations grew and developed, men and women recognized expanded opportunities—and responsibilities—for women to contribute to the Church and its members and investigators. Women were increasingly prepared to become impressive community speakers and leaders, prominent and visible heads of local and general Church auxiliary organizations, and, as the nineteenth century waned, full-time missionaries.

One such woman was Elizabeth Ann Claridge McCune, born in England, and raised in Nephi, Utah. Married at age 20 to her childhood sweetheart, Alfred W. McCune, she became an important figure in Salt Lake City community affairs. In 1897, while traveling in England with her husband, she was called upon to speak at a

the Quorum of the Twelve, with Brigham Young as president of the quorum, Phebe was called to serve with her husband as he presided over the mission in Great Britain. On August 28, 1844, Phebe received the following blessing from Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball:

"Beloved Sister[,] in the name of the Lord we bless you as you are about to take you[r] departure over the sea in company with your husband where he is going to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You shall be blessed on your mission in common with your husband & shall have the desires of your heart in all things. . . .

"Thou shall be satisfied with your mission."

Phebe and Wilford, together with their children, served a rewarding and successful mission lasting nearly twenty months, returning to Nauvoo on April 13, 1846. □

conference to counter scurrilous anti-Mormon claims about Latter-day Saint women. Her presence and impassioned speech led Elder Joseph W. McMurrin of the European Mission Presidency to write the First Presidency with an important request: would it be possible for women to be called as full-time missionaries? Noting specific occasions when "our sisters gained attention in England, where the Elders could scarcely gain a hearing," he opined that "if a number of bright and intelligent women were called on missions to England, the results would be excellent."¹⁶

McMurrin was not alone in his feelings. Mission presidents in other parts of the world likewise imagined women's potential as public representatives of the Church, especially in areas where anti-Mormonism was entrenched. Like McMurrin, many of these presidents had observed firsthand the moving, effective oratory of such women as Rebecca Neibaur Nibley and Emmaretta Whitney Pyper.

In response to mission president appeals, and through divine guidance, President Wilford Woodruff and his counselors opened the door in early 1898 to full-time missionary service for women. Within weeks, Amanda Inez Knight and Lucy Jane Brimhall were the first single women to be called as proselytizing missionaries. At the time of their calls, they had already scheduled a speaking trip to England, but their original plans were now significantly altered through being assigned full-time proselytizing responsibilities.¹⁷ Harriet Horspool Nye and seven other married women were also called as missionaries and requested to join their husbands in California; Knight, Brimhall, and Nye were among the first LDS women missionaries to receive ministerial certification.¹⁸ Within a few months, sisters also began receiving formal mission calls from "Box B"—the same post office box from which male mission calls were sent.

Perhaps it goes without saying that, in serving in what had previously been an all-male domain, single sister missionaries took some getting used to. When Sisters Amanda Knight and Lucy Brimhall arrived in England, for example, many of the young

elders were confused as to a sister missionary's role, questioning whether "the sisters' callings were equal to their own." In response, "the presidency of the mission made it very clear that the same authority which called the men on their missions also called the women."¹⁹ This equality was underscored by the duties of the new sister missionaries: like the elders, they also "distributed pamphlets door to door, held street meetings, and participated in Church conferences."²⁰ Alongside elders, they preached the gospel in homes and halls., and they experienced rejection and persecution. Their writings tell eloquently of the perils of mission life, the prejudices faced by Mormon women missionaries, and the powerful spiritual manifestations to sisters as well as elders in the field.

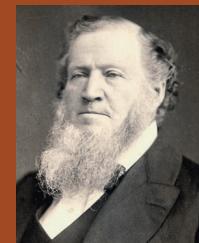
Despite a certain cultural bias favoring early marriage for women, and despite the prejudices of some who felt that women should not be involved in public life, the experiment of sending women on full-time missions flourished. As the first years of the twentieth century unfolded, the number of sister missionaries increased and their roles continued to evolve.

1915–1945

Male missionary service was greatly affected by the two World Wars, and this opened up new opportunities for sister missionaries. With the onset in the late summer of 1914 of the Great War, the Church withdrew its missionaries from Europe. And after the United States entered the war in April 1917, many young LDS men were called into military service in Europe, and few remained to perform missionary service in other parts of the world. While the Church did not recruit women missionaries to compensate for the lack of men, many women nonetheless volunteered. From 1913 to 1917 more than 650 women served missions, comprising twenty-two percent of the missionary force at that time; percentages of women missionaries in the LDS missionary force were even higher during 1917 and 1918. Although women continued faithfully to volunteer for proselyting assignments,

"The last conversation

. . . President Brigham Young ever held on this earth was in relation to the sending forth to the world a group of women missionaries, among whom were Eliza R. Snow, Isabella M. Horne, Zina Young Card, and Susa Young Gates. He remarked to Sister Eliza R. Snow, as he took his candle to retire for the night, that it was an experiment, (the sending of sisters out into the world,) but it was an experiment that he would like to see tried. Then turning as he reached the door, he added, "You go right on with this work, and I think I will go and take my rest!"



—*Young Woman's Journal*

VOL. 10 (1899), 335.

they often received stereotyped responsibilities (as mission secretaries or stenographers, for example) once in the field. Too, they sometimes encountered biased male missionaries who believed sisters "could not do as much as the elders because they were not in the Priesthood."²¹

But mission presidents and other Church leaders proclaimed women missionaries to be an unqualified success. For example, the *Improvement Era* published a 1915 report from the Eastern States Mission stating that "the idea of having lady missionaries is new in this mission, but is no longer an experiment. The faithful labors of these sisters have gone far in making the mission what it is today. Neither their devotion can be questioned nor their industry criticized."²² David O. McKay, in 1921, noted that "many an instance has driven home the fact of the sweetness, potency, and permanency of the work of our lady missionaries."²³ And later that decade, at the October 1928 General Conference, a

reporting mission president noted that young women “can get into the homes of the people and find an opportunity for explaining the gospel where the elder cannot go. Send us more lady missionaries.”²⁴ By the 1930s, Church leaders widely acknowledged that female missionaries were a great aid and blessing in the work of bringing souls to Christ.²⁵

In 1941, however, the threat posed to the safety of sister missionaries by World War II caused the First Presidency to temporarily discontinue female missionary service.²⁶ In 1943 three exceptions to this policy were noted, enabling the calling of sisters who (1) possessed stenographic and other secretarial skills and could assist in mission offices; (2) were certified school teachers and able to fill positions at Church and other schools, spending their off-time in missionary service; or (3) were the wives of men beyond the draft age and were able to accompany their husbands into the field. Even in these limited roles, women missionaries apparently comprised forty percent of the Church’s missionary force during the final two years of the War.²⁷

POSTSCRIPT

After President Thomas S. Monson lowered the age requirement for sister missionaries to nineteen years in 2012, the number of women missionaries surged to over 25% of the Mormon missionary force. The announcement generated substantial excitement and made national news. In contrast, the 1898 announcement that women could serve full-time missions was accompanied by little fanfare. Few Church members today are even aware of the genesis story of sister missionary service. It is hoped that articles in this issue will help recover the important story of Latter-day Saint women missionary pioneers. □

Excerpts from Sarah’s article, “Women Proclaiming the Gospel on Missions,” posted online May 1, 2006 at segullah.org under her maiden name Sarah Elizabeth Jensen. Sarah is currently Executive Vice President at Weber Shandwick, New York.

¹ Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith and His Progenitors* (Liverpool, 1853), 186–91.

² See letters from Mary Ann Price Fulmer in John Fulmer, *Letterbook*, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

³ Parley P. Pratt, “Duties of Women,” *Millennial Star* 1:4 (Aug. 1840), 100–1.

⁴ Kunz 12–17.

⁵ Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Monday, 8 Apr. 1850; cited in Kunz 17.

⁶ Kate B. Carter, *Heart Throbs of the West* (1939) VIII, 252; cited in Kunz 19.

⁷ Kunz 38.

⁸ Kunz 58.

⁹ Kunz 58–9, 60–1.

¹⁰ Maxine Hanks, *Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism* (1989), 318.

¹¹ Parley P. Pratt, “Duties of Women,” *Millennial Star*, 1:8 (Aug. 1840), 100–01; cited by Kunz 8.

¹² Kunz 62.

¹³ Ida Luetta Roberts, letter to the editor, *Young Woman’s Journal*, 9 (1899), 126–27; cited in Kunz 69.

¹⁴ Viola [Pratt?], “Missionary Work for the Girls,” *Young Woman’s Journal* 2:1 (Oct. 1890), 29–30.

¹⁵ Kunz 27.

¹⁶ Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 11 Mar. 1898.

¹⁷ Kunz 34–7.

¹⁸ Kunz 36–7.

¹⁹ Susa Young Gates, “Missionaries,” Susa Young Gates Papers, document case 19, Utah Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah, sheet 7; cited in Kunz 37. Throughout most of 1898, the presidency of what was then designated the European Mission, headquartered in London, were Rulon S. Wells, president; Joseph W. McMurrin, first counselor; and Edwin F. Parry, second counselor. This mission presidency was released in December of that year, and a new presidency was sustained: Amos N. Merrill, president; Platte D. Lyman, first counselor; and Henry W. Naisbitt, second counselor. Presumably, the quotation comes from President Wells and his counselors.

²⁰ Jessie L. Embry, “LDS Sister Missionaries: An Oral History Response, 1910–1970,” *Journal of Mormon History* 23:1 (1999), 108.

²¹ Hanks 319.

²² Anonymous, “Messages from the Missions,” *Improvement Era* 18:3 (March 1915), 457.

²³ David O. McKay, “Our Lady Missionaries,” *Young Woman’s Journal*; 32 (1921), 503.

²⁴ Elder John G. Allred, President of the North-Central States Mission, Conference Report (October 1928): 59, quoted in Lyon and McFarland, 78.

²⁵ Embry 110.

²⁶ Embry 111.

²⁷ Hanks 319.

WOMEN SHARED THE GOSPEL LONG BEFORE RECEIVING MISSION CALLS

BY ELIZABETH MAKI, Church History Department



Ann Sophia Jones Rosser was legendary for her tenacity in sharing the gospel. In a single day, the early Welsh convert was credited with distributing fifty tracts and selling seven copies of the Book of Mormon—labors that reportedly led to the conversion of twelve people. It was later written of her that she took “an active part in the gospel, always doing her utmost to announce its ‘glad tidings.’”¹

Yet Rosser, who joined the Church in the early 1850s, was never set apart as a missionary; her efforts to proclaim the gospel came decades before LDS women were called to serve proselytizing missions. Like so many women before and after her, Rosser didn’t need the call to do the work.

Rosser’s preaching may have happened as part of a plan similar to one laid out in 1851 by Eli B. Kelsey, president of the London Conference. Kelsey wrote to the *Millennial Star* in January about an ambitious plan to circulate 25,000 tracts—paid for by members—in his area. To do so, he called upon “every faithful, able-bodied Saint, whose circumstances will permit him or her to assist in rolling on the word of God.”

“What a glorious opportunity,” he wrote, “for the young men and maidens to prove themselves worthy. . . . The minds of all are fully prepared to enter into the good work with energy and zeal.” In Kelsey’s plan, men and women distributing tracts would be “confronted and called upon to give a reason for the hope within them.”² Four months later, Kelsey reported to the *Star* that the members’ efforts had resulted in more than three hundred baptisms.³

Edward Tullidge reported in 1877 that “tracting societies” like the one Kelsey formed were a feature in towns and cities across the British Mission, where he claimed women “had much better missionary opportunities than in America.”⁴

In England, Scotland, and Wales, the sisters distributing tracts were “preachers, in a way; and they carried their sermons to the homes of rich and poor, to be read at the fireside by those who, but for this, never would have gone to hear an elder preach. In short,” Tullidge concluded, “the sisters, in the work abroad, were a great missionary power.”⁵

President Richards: Dear Brother,—
It is with pleasure that I once more take up my pen to address a few lines to you, to inform you of the present progress and future prospects of the work of God in the London Conference.

Since I wrote to you in January, between three and four hundred members have been added by baptism, and, according to the monthly reports of the presidents of branches and travelling elders, now coming in, the prospects are very bright indeed, for a far greater increase in the next three months.

The number of tracts now in circulation in this Conference is twenty thousand; this number will be increased to over thirty thousand by the first of June. These silent messengers are generally well received, and have had a tendency to bring hundreds to the meetings who never came before.

The various meeting places, with the hour of worship, are advertised upon the covers of these tracts; thus, we have twenty thousand advertisements in weekly circulation, from house to house, informing the honest inquirers after truth of the times when, and places where it is dealt out in rich profusion by the servants of God. This of itself will be productive of great good, and when, in addition to the good that will result from such an extensive spread of the principles of the Gospel, we take

In 1883, the tract societies got a boost when the Church began purchasing the tracts intended for distribution "as a means of warning the people, making known our doctrines, forming new acquaintances, and preparing the way for out-door preaching" in the British Mission. Along with being supplied tracts, local congregations were instructed to "organize tract societies where such do not already exist, among the members under their jurisdiction. These may include sisters as well as brethren, but they should be persons in good standing, whose character will not bring reproach upon the cause."⁶

Thousands of women wholeheartedly participated in tract societies, engaging in what today might be called member missionary work. "We each have a mission to perform," wrote Elicia Grist in 1861, addressing the Latter-day Saint women of Great Britain. "There is ample opportunity afforded us for testifying and [for] exercising the gifts of the Spirit. . . . When we have participated in these holy inspirations, our testimony may have caused some . . . present to reflect more deeply and closely upon what has been said. . . . While in company with our neighbor or friendly visitor, . . . we may have the chance of conversing upon the principles of the Church . . . ; and who knows but that in this way we may be the means of convincing some honest lover of truth, and showing him or her the way of salvation!"⁷ □

1 Elmer B. Edwards, "A Faithful Sister," *Millennial Star*, 78:18 (4 May 1916), 278–9.

2 Eli B. Kelsey, "Latter-day Saints in London," *Millennial Star*, 13:3 (1 Feb. 1851), 33–7.

3 Eli B. Kelsey, "A Communication from Elder Eli B. Kelsey," *Millennial Star*, 13:9 (1 May 1851), 140.

4 Edward W. Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom* (New York, 1877), reprint (Salt Lake City, 1957), 267.

5 Tullidge, 277.

6 "The Work of the Ministry," *Millennial Star*, 45:12 (19 Mar. 1883), 185–7.

7 Elicia Grist, "Address to the Sisters of the Church," *Millennial Star*, 23:18 (4 May 1861), 277–8.

Left: Eli B. Kelsey's text in the *Millennial Star*, 13:9 (1 May 1851), 140.

1840s AND 1850s: In England, Scotland, and Wales thousands of women participated in highly organized **TRACTING SOCIETIES**.

— **1844**, August 28th, **PHEBE WOODRUFF** called to serve with her husband Wilford as he presided over the Great Britain mission.



1850

— **1851: LOUISA BARNES PRATT**

accompanying her husband, Addison Pratt, who had been called to preach the gospel on the island of Tubuai, 1851–1852.



1860

— **1865: MILDRED RANDALL** was set apart to travel with her husband to Hawaii, where she served as a teacher. In **1873**, she became the first woman to depart on a mission without her husband when she returned to Hawaii to teach for three years.



— **1877, August 29th, BRIGHAM YOUNG** passed away. The last conversation he held was in relation to the "experiment" of sending sisters out into the world.

1870

— **1883:** The Church began to buy tracts and have members in the British Mission distribute them.

1880

— **1890, October 6th**, President Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto, ending plural marriage in the Church.

1890

EARLY MISSIONARY

Louisa Barnes Pratt *in French Polynesia*

BY BRITTANY
CHAPMAN

Church History Department

Louisa Barnes Pratt, one of the first women missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in French Polynesia, served with her husband and four daughters on the island of Tubuai from 1851 to 1852. Louisa's husband, Addison Pratt, had been called by Joseph Smith on May 11, 1843, to preach the gospel in the Pacific. Addison and three companions arrived at Tubuai on April 30, 1844, and commenced teaching the gospel, with converts numbering in the hundreds.

Not long after Addison returned in 1848, he was called back to the Society Islands. Louisa subsequently received a call to join him there, and she and her children left the Salt Lake Valley in April 1850. Louisa recorded her experiences as a missionary in her "Reminiscences"—now located at the Church History Library—written in 1879 when she was 77 years old. She begins with the day of her call:



"Pres't Brigham Young blessed me; said I should go & return in peace, in the due time of the Lord, . . . enabled to do great good."

"While conference was in session [in the spring of 1850], Thomkins

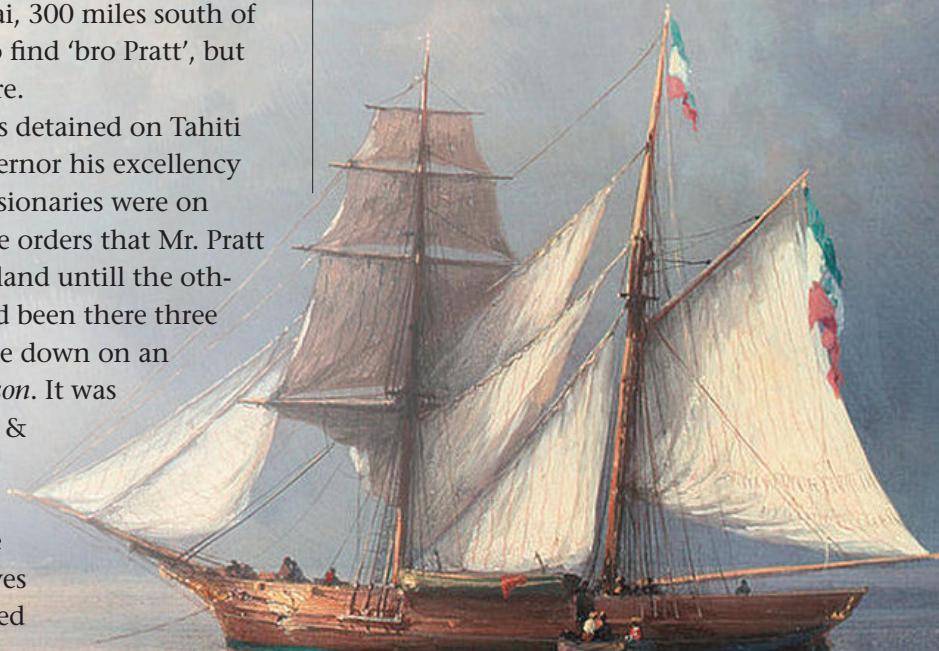
Thomas was called on a mission to the Islands to take bro' Pratt's family. It was a great shock to me, being present, little did I hear of the preaching the remainder of the meeting. A journey of a thousand miles by land, & a voyage by sea of 5000 miles. My four daughters to be fitted up in a suitable manner to be presented to their father's acquaintance in San Francisco, I could not avoid a dread of the labor that would crowd upon me. By the aid of the kindest hands & hearts I was made ready, & on the 7th of May 1850 we bid farewell to the Saints in S Lake & started on the long journey. Pres't B[igham] Young blessed me; said I should go & return in peace, in the due time of the Lord, be enabled to do great good, that I should have power over the destroyer to rebuke him from my

house, that none of my children should be taken from me by death, while I was absent from the church. The promise proved true to me; & in one instance when death seemed inevitable, I claimed the promise, & it was fulfilled. We met our friends in San Francisco, who received us with great kindness, & administered to our needs in every thing. On the 15th of Sept we set Sail for the South pacific Islands. We had a pleasant passage of 35 days, in the Brig *Jane A. Hersey*, Capt. Salmon. I suffered greatly with seasickness; as did my sister C[aroline]¹ Crosby, the most prostrating of all diseases in the world! My daughters did not seem affected in the least, could walk the deck when the ship was rolling from side to side. I could only rally when I heard the cry of *Shark, Skipjack, Albatross!* I could then rush to the vessel's side, hang on to the bulwarks, while I viewed the wonders I had often heard of, but never saw before. The voyage wore away, & we landed on Tubuai, 300 miles south of Tahiti, where we expected to find 'bro Pratt', but lo! & behold he was not there.

"We soon learned he was detained on Tahiti by orders of the French Governor his excellency having heard that other missionaries were on their way to the Islands, gave orders that Mr. Pratt should be confined to the Island until the others arrived. . . . When we had been there three months in suspense, he came down on an English schooner, *Capt Johnson*. It was a great day with the natives, & with our daughters. While we were waiting with great anxiety to hear of his release from confinement, the natives showed us the most unlimited

kindness & attention. The king was mindful of our comforts, & directed that everything needful be done for us. I wish all kings were as good & true hearted as good old Tama [T]oa; for that was his name. . . .

"Mr. Pratt's companion in the mission was there with a native wife, Benjamin F. Grouard. Likewise two other elders, white men, who embraced the gospel on the Islands, & had been ordained under the hands of 'Pratt & Grouard.' They were good faithful men; they did all in their power to reconcile us to our disappointment in not finding bro' Pratt on the Island. The natives fitted up the mission house according to their views of comfort, & we could not help admiring their ingenuity. Every thing was so new & astonishing; our minds were necessarily diverted & amused. The beautiful trees & flowers, the



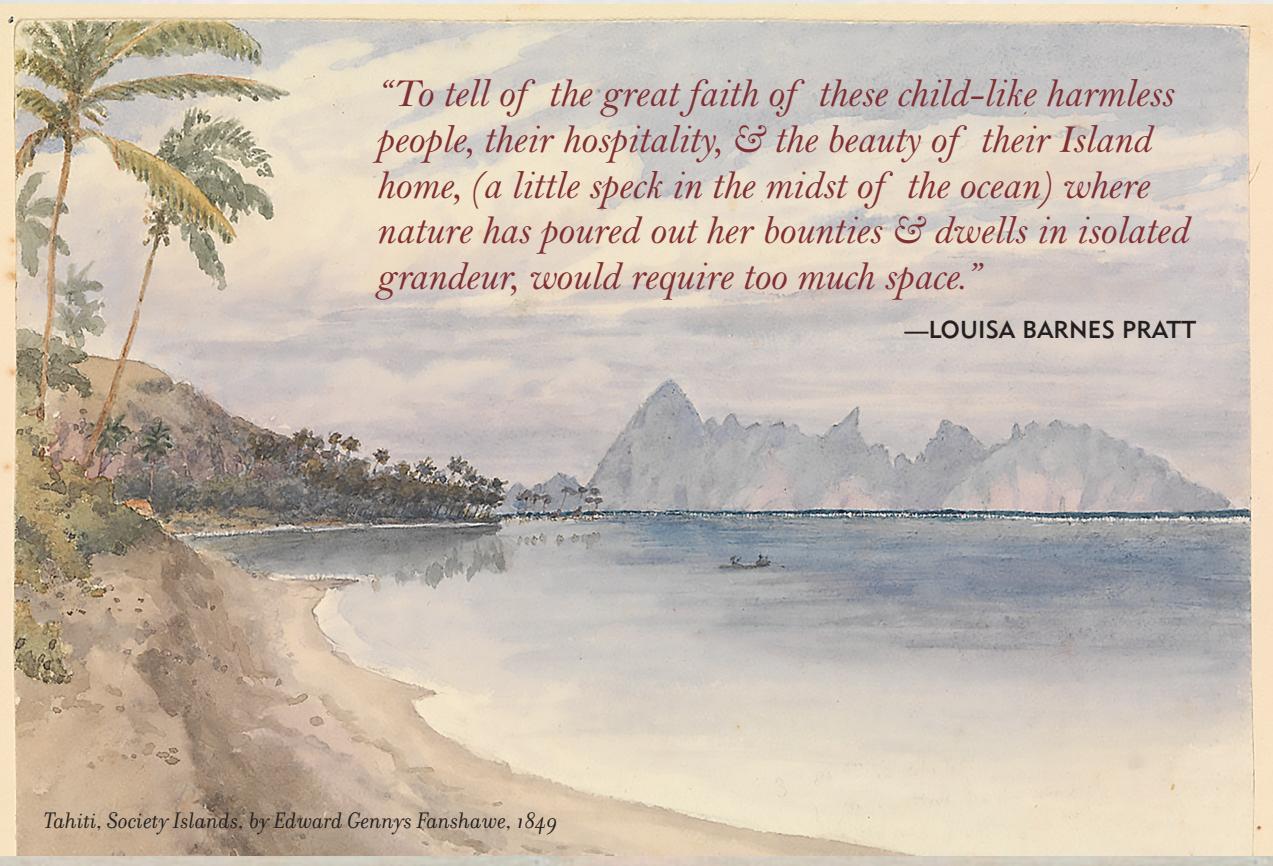
Calm Early Evening Sea, by Ivan Konstantinovich Aivazovsky, 1884

delicious fruit, the splendid fish, with red & green scales, such as we had never seen before; every article of food was new to us except fish & fowls, & even that being prepared on a plan entirely different from our method seemed another sort of food, but not the less palatable; even the first meal was agreeable to me, & I believe it was to all the company. We commenced immediately to study the Tahitian language. The native brethren & sisters were extremely attentive in teaching us; would manifest uneasiness if we were in the least dilatory in our studies. They would say to us, '[H]a pe pe, te ha piu, te parau tahiti'— make haste & learn to talk [T]ahiti. My daughters soon learned to talk with the children; within three months the eldest daughter was able to interpret for me when I wished to address the native sisters in a meeting. I had been there nearly a year before I could stand up in a publick meeting & speak independently. I could then translate readily, & write letters in the Tahitian. The native sisters expressed great joy at my first attempts, wherein I exceeded their expectations as also my own.

To tell of the great faith of these child-like harmless people, their hospitality, & the beauty of their Island home, (a little speck in the midst of the ocean) where nature has poured out her bounties & dwells in isolated grandeur, would require too much space, at the present. Best it will be found written in my full history, which I hope to have published.

"One year & a half I taught school in the 'pere hur' (house of worship) both Sabbaths & week-days. I taught the women to knit; some of the old men came & wanted to learn, so I learned them to knit suspenders, of the yarn I took from California. For needles we used the stem of the cocoanut leaf, which answered a good purpose. The women were very teachable in learning any thing I attempted to teach them. . . .

"It was sad parting with the loving souls, & especially with the children we had kept in our family. It was thought wisdom to leave, as the Island was under the [F]rench protectorite & the governor had sent away the English missionaries, & we knew not how soon he might order us away.



"To tell of the great faith of these child-like harmless people, their hospitality, & the beauty of their Island home, (a little speck in the midst of the ocean) where nature has poured out her bounties & dwells in isolated grandeur, would require too much space."

—LOUISA BARNES PRATT

Tahiti, Society Islands, by Edward Gennys Fanshawe, 1849

"Three months we stayed on Tahiti after leaving Tubuai; the elders built a house for the merchants to get money to defray our expenses over the sea. That great centre island is a fruit & flower garden! such enchanting scenery my eyes never beheld before, nor since."²

In March 1852, in response to the increasingly obvious success of foreign Christian missionaries throughout Polynesia, the government of French Polynesia passed a law placing all Christian churches under state control and prohibiting Christian proselytizing except by native Polynesians. Effectually under house arrest and unable to fulfill their proselytizing responsibilities, the Pratts and their American missionary associates determined to make arrangements to return to the United States. On April 6, 1852, they sailed from Tubuai to Tahiti, about 400 miles to the north, arriving there on April 11. They remained in Tahiti for just over a month, setting sail aboard the *Callao* on May 15, 1852, and arriving in San Francisco on June 30.

The Pratts would remain among the saints in San Francisco until early December 1852, when they sailed from San Francisco to San Pedro and then made the overland journey to San Bernardino, where the main body of California saints had gathered. Louisa would have primary responsibility for her family for the next five years. Addison often shuttled between northern and southern California in search of work. And he was called on two additional missions to French Polynesia, the first from October 1853 until mid-1854 (when the call was aborted after efforts to raise passage money were unsuccessful), and the second from April 1856 to April 1857.

Louisa would record later that she, Addison, and their children "had nothing when we came from the islands. Not an article to keep house with, except one old rocking chair." Referencing their consecration, she said simply, "All the earnings of our early lives, were spent in traveling, wandering from place to place to keep with

the church, and away from our enemies."³ But Louisa did return with more significant personal resources: an undying testimony of the restored gospel of Christ, an unquestioning faith in prayer and priesthood power, and an unwavering commitment to serve the Lord diligently to the end. Through her remaining years, Louisa found countless opportunities to encourage her four daughters and their children and grandchildren and to bless each of their lives. Her small home and well-kept yard were often the sites of community meetings, celebrations, and other gatherings. Repeatedly, she provided shelter to the homeless and loving nurture to the physically or emotionally ill. She befriended and supported other women, especially the elderly and other single mothers like herself. She prayed for their children. She rejoiced at communal triumphs and grieved for shared failures.

And when Church leaders requested the California saints to pull up stakes, sell their homes and possessions, and make the Big Move to Salt Lake City in early 1858, Louisa willingly complied—even though Addison, suffering from chronic lung disease and concerned for his health, elected to remain in California with their second daughter and her husband. Louisa spent most of the next year traveling from southern California through southern Nevada and the length of present-day Utah, eventually determining in late 1858 to settle in Beaver, Utah. Apart from extended trips to various of Utah's pioneer towns, California, and Canada, Louisa would spend the rest of her life in Beaver, increasingly beloved as one of its earliest settlers and most devoted saints. Her posterity numbers in the thousands and includes faithful men and women prominent in politics, business, education, and the arts. □

1 Caroline Barnes Crosby and her family joined Louisa as missionaries in the Society Islands.

2 Louisa Barnes Pratt, *Reminiscences*, 78–80, 81–2, Church Archives.

3 Louisa Barnes Pratt, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, ed. George Ellsworth (1998), 198.

"I Am on a Foreign Mission"

MILDRED RANDALL: THE FIRST WOMAN TO SERVE A MISSION WITHOUT HER HUSBAND

BY ELIZABETH MAKI, *Church History Department*

For nearly seventy years, the only women who served missions for the LDS Church did so in the company of their husbands. Separate from the men's role as spreaders of the gospel message, women on missions customarily kept house, raised children, and cooked for the crowds of missionaries who often congregated in their homes. It wasn't until 1865 that women leaving for mission fields with their husbands were set apart as missionaries, but even this did not signal a change of expectations or roles.

Initially, Mildred Randall's experience was little different from those of other sisters who accompanied their husbands on their missionary journeys. Mildred was the third wife of Alfred Randall, and after they wed in 1860 he married two more women in polygamy. In 1865, Mildred became one of the first LDS women formally set apart as a missionary when she was assigned to accompany Alfred to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), where Alfred would

help manage the Church plantation in Laie and Mildred would teach school. She sold her home to pay for the trip, gave her furniture to friends, and was soon on her way.¹

The trip began when the Randalls and several other missionaries took a six-week journey, first by freight wagons across Nevada and over the Sierras, and then by train to Sacramento. From there, they took a steamer to San Francisco, where they boarded the *D.G. Murray* and set sail for the islands on June 23, 1865. The group arrived in Honolulu on July 6, where they transferred to a schooner to travel to Laie, on the other side of the island. Martha Louisa Dilworth Nebeker, the wife of the mission president traveling with the group, described the end of their journey:

"We lay to about one mile out at sea, taking turns in going ashore, each one of us having to jump from the schooner to a small fishing boat (as the waves would wash the two boats together) and were then rowed ashore. After all



had landed, thirty-five of us, taking all day, we started for the plantation house, going seventeen of us at a time in a large ox cart.”²

Mildred soon set about organizing a small plantation school for the native children and another for the foreign children, but within two months her husband departed the islands to return to Utah, leaving Mildred alone in the mission field. She remained there to teach school until she was released by Brigham Young more than a year later.³ In her letter of release, President Young told Mildred that her “faithfulness and diligence in staying there after [her] partner returned home and doing all the good that [she] could to benefit the people and help the mission, [was] appreciated, and we feel to bless you therefore.”⁴

While independent service of that nature was already highly unusual for an LDS woman, Mildred soon had another distinction: she was the first woman to be officially set apart for a mission without her husband. In 1873, she was called to again teach at the plantation school in Hawaii while Alfred stayed home in Utah.

“I do not feel at all discouraged,” Mildred wrote her sister from the islands. “I am on a foreign mission, and the first woman who has ever been sent on such a mission without her husband. I consider it a great privilege and shall endeavor to do all the good I can while here.”⁵

On her second mission to the Sandwich Islands, Mildred supported herself with the proceeds from her school. She told her sister early in 1874 that, though running the school was not without difficulties, Students had “increased in number and . . . I feel more encouraged.” She ended with a succinct testimony. “The work,” she wrote, “is progressing on the islands.”⁶

Mildred’s second mission lasted three years; she sailed back to the United States on June 20, 1876.⁷

When Mildred Randall passed away in 1913, she was remembered for her selfless service in Laie. Historian Andrew Jensen noted her passing in these words: “Mrs. Mildred E. Randall of Hawaiian mission fame, died in Salt Lake City, 85 years old.”⁸ □

1 Mildred Moss Boyce, *History of Mildred Eliza Johnson Randall*, March 1, 1979, Church Archives.

2 Boyce *op. cit.*

3 Carol Cornwall Madsen, “Mormon Missionary Wives in Nineteenth Century Polynesia,” *Journal of Mormon History*, 13 (1986).

4 Brigham Young to Mildred Randall, October 15, 1866, Church Archives.

5 Mildred Randall to Mary Jane Johnson Eakle, February 1873 (date likely 1874), Church Archives.

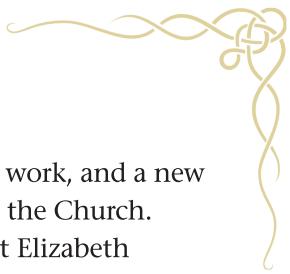
6 Randall *op. cit.*

7 Boyce *op. cit.*

8 Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology: A Record of Important Events Pertaining to the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, 1899); online, Google Books.



Elizabeth McCune Helped Pave *the* Way for Sister Missionaries



"I often felt if I were commissioned of God as the young men were, I could have gone into every house and entered into a quiet religious chat with the people; leaving with each one my earnest testimony."



BY MATTHEW S. MCBRIDE

Church History Department

On March 11, 1898, the First Presidency of the LDS Church held a regularly scheduled business meeting that would turn out to have far-reaching significance. President Wilford Woodruff and his counselors, Joseph F. Smith and George Q. Cannon, had recently received a handful of letters from mission presidents around the world requesting women missionaries.¹ One of these letters came from Joseph W. McMurrin of the European Mission presidency, who submitted "instances in which our sisters gained attention in England, where the Elders could scarcely gain a hearing." He believed, the letter continued, "that if a number of bright and intelligent women were called on missions to England, the results would be excellent."²

After some discussion, the presidency concluded to call and set apart single sister missionaries and to provide them, for the first time in Church history, with certificates authorizing them to preach the gospel. The move opened the door for a new era

Left: Minster Street, Salisbury, by Louise Ingram Rayner

in LDS missionary work, and a new era for women in the Church.

And without Elizabeth McCune, McMurrin might never have written that letter.

Born Elizabeth Claridge in England in 1852, Elizabeth was raised in rural Nephi, Utah. When she was 16, her father, Samuel, answered Brigham Young's call to pioneer the bleak Muddy Mission in the southern desert of what would become Nevada. When she returned north

a few years later, she married her childhood sweetheart, promising young businessman Alfred W. McCune. A stunning series of business successes soon catapulted Alfred and Elizabeth to fame as one of Utah's wealthiest families.

This wealth, however, came at a price for Elizabeth. Increasingly preoccupied with his business affairs, Alfred distanced himself from the Church. Devastated, Elizabeth nevertheless remained a loyal companion to her husband, praying that he would eventually experience a revival in his faith. For her part, she considered her affluence a stewardship, ensuring that the family made generous donations to Church causes and provided support to friends and family in need. She also used the time her situation afforded her to serve in the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association in her ward and to become an astute genealogist.

A TOUR OF EUROPE

In February 1897, the McCunes prepared to embark on an extended tour of Europe. Their journey would take them to Elizabeth's homeland of England, as well as to France and Italy. While the family planned to do a great deal of sightseeing, Elizabeth viewed the trip, in part, as an opportunity to further her genealogical research.

Considering this research as a spiritual endeavor, she visited Quorum of the Twelve President Lorenzo Snow for a priesthood blessing before embarking on the trip. His words to her suggested yet

another spiritual purpose: “Among other beautiful promises, he said, ‘Thy mind shall be as clear as an angel’s when explaining the principles of the Gospel.’”⁴ The significance of these words became even more striking to Elizabeth as the events of her European tour played out.

At the time of their trip, Elizabeth was a 45-year-old mother of seven. Her four youngest children⁵ accompanied her on the voyage, and she looked forward with anticipation to a reunion with her 19-year-old son, Raymond, who was then serving a mission in Great Britain. Upon arriving in England, the McCunes rented a home in the fashionable resort town of Eastbourne. The house “was large and roomy, the grounds extensive and beautiful.”⁶ She invited Raymond and some of the other elders in the area to stay with the family.



See video online: “This Grand Opportunity: Elizabeth McCune and the First Sister Missionaries” at history.lds.org/article/sister-missionaries

Elizabeth and her daughter Fay regularly accompanied the elders to their street meetings on the beachside promenade in Eastbourne. They sang hymns to attract the attention of the crowd and held the elders’ books and hats while they preached.⁷ After these meetings, the elders invited those interested to call on them at No. 4 Grange Gardens, the McCune’s temporary residence. This inevitably elicited looks of shocked surprise. After all, Mormon elders typically dwelt in much humbler circumstances.

Her experience at these street meetings and in distributing tracts door to door with the elders⁸ proved to Elizabeth that she could withstand an occasional contemptuous glance without fear. But she hoped to play a more active role in the preaching of the gospel. She said she “sometimes had an ardent desire to speak herself, feeling that as she was a woman she might attract more attention than the young men and therefore do good.” She nevertheless worried that if she “had this privilege [she] might have failed entirely though [she] so ardently desired success.”⁹ Such an opportunity would come, and sooner than she might have expected.

‘THE NOTORIOUS JARMAN’

During the 1880s and 1890s, a former Latter-day Saint named William Jarman traveled throughout England promoting his recently published anti-Mormon book. His no-holds-barred attacks on the Church and scandalous claims about life in Utah not only caused a stir due to their sensationalism, but appeared to be bolstered and validated by his “insider” status as a former member. In short, he represented a major public relations problem for the Church.¹⁰ His assertions about Mormon women were particularly unflattering, and mission leadership found Jarman’s campaign difficult to combat with a force of young male missionaries.

As 1897 waned, the time for the semi-annual London Conference drew near. The saints in the London area gathered at the Clerkenwell Town Hall on October 28 to receive instruction from their local leaders. Elizabeth McCune was among those who attended the afternoon session. The hall was “filled with the Saints and strangers; some very distinguished people being present.” President Rulon S. Wells and his counselor Joseph W. McMurrin addressed the assemblage. Elizabeth was so stirred by their remarks that she felt “the whole audience must be converted by the power manifested.”

McMurrin spoke of “the base falsehoods which Jarman and his daughters had so industriously circulated regarding the Mormon women being confined behind a wall in Utah, and of their ignorance and degraded conditions.” Then, to Elizabeth’s astonishment, he said, “We have with us just now,

a lady from Utah who has traveled all over Europe with her husband and family, and hearing of our conference, she has met with us. We are going to ask Sister McCune to speak this evening and tell you of her experience in Utah.”¹¹

Elizabeth later candidly confessed that the announcement “nearly frightened me to death.” McMurrin asked all those present to invite their friends to the evening meeting to listen to “the lady from Utah.” Elizabeth continued: “The Elders assured me that they would give me their faith and prayers, and I added my own fervent appeals to my Heavenly Father for aid and support.” She added modestly, “I said in my heart, ‘O, if we only had one of our good woman speakers from Utah to take advantage of this grand opportunity what good it might do!’”¹²

‘THE LADY FROM UTAH’

As the hour for the evening meeting drew near, the hall began to fill. The recorder for the conference noted, “Despite the fact that extra seats were placed in the hall and the gallery thrown open, people had to be turned away from the doors.”¹³ Word had spread and a curious crowd had gathered to hear the lady from Utah.

“*Thy mind shall be as clear as an angel’s when explaining the principles of the Gospel.*”

—LORENZO SNOW to Elizabeth McCune



1890



“There are numerous factors that led the Church to certify full-time single sister missionaries, but a letter from Elder

JOSEPH W. MCMURRIN

[of the European Mission presidency] appears to have been particularly influential. McMurrin’s letter highlighted occasions where the sisters ‘gained attention in England where the Elders could scarcely gain a hearing.’ Other local Church leaders wrote letters echoing McMurrin ‘in reference to the good which could be and is accomplished by lady missionaries from Zion.’”

See Sarah Elizabeth Jensen, “Women Proclaiming the Gospel on Missions: An Historical Overview,” *Segullah Volume 2.1 Spring 2006*.

— ELIZABETH MCCUNE SPEAKS AT THE OCTOBER 28, 1897, SEMI-ANNUAL LONDON CONFERENCE.

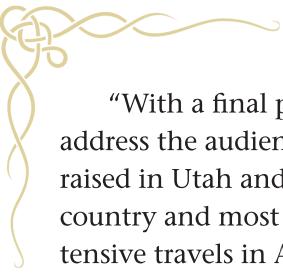
1897

— PRESIDENT MCMURRIN wrote his letter to the First Presidency soon after the McCunes left England.

— MARCH 11, 1898: First Presidency’s decision to call sister missionaries.

1898

— APRIL 1, 1898: AMANDA INEZ KNIGHT and LUCY JANE BRIMHALL set apart to be the first single, certified, female proselyting missionaries in the history of the Church.



"With a final prayer," she recalled, "I arose to address the audience. . . . I told them I had been raised in Utah and knew almost every foot of the country and most of the people. I spoke of my extensive travels in America and in Europe, and said that nowhere had I found women held in such esteem as among the Mormons of Utah."

Elizabeth went on, "Our husbands are proud of their wives and daughters; they do not consider that they were created solely to wash dishes and tend babies; but they give them every opportunity to attend meetings and lectures and to take up everything which will educate and develop them. Our religion teaches us that the wife stands shoulder to shoulder with the husband."¹⁴



See video online: *"This Grand Opportunity."*

The effect of Elizabeth's presence and words was electric. This simple sermon by a Mormon woman had done more to dispel the stigma fostered by Jarman than the best efforts of the elders. After the meeting she was approached by several strangers. One said, "If more of your women would come out here a great amount of good would be done." Said another: "'I have always had a desire in my heart to see a Mormon woman and to hear her speak. Madam, you carry truth in your voice and words."¹⁵ Elizabeth concluded, "This incident opened my eyes as to the great work our sisters could do."

President McMurrin, taking careful note of the outcome of that meeting, invited Elizabeth to accompany him to the Nottingham conference the

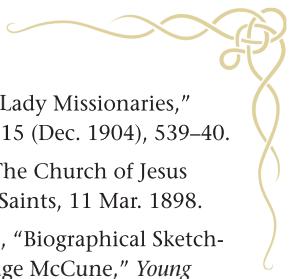
following Sunday. She spoke in Nottingham along with her son Raymond. Her topic: "the conditions of the people in Utah."¹⁶ She remembered, "After this, every branch wanted me to come and speak at their meetings. They said they could get crowded halls if I would."¹⁶

Her impending departure to Italy prevented further opportunities to speak, but the seed had been planted. President McMurrin was convinced that her efforts had been the "means of allaying much prejudice." He wrote his letter to the First Presidency soon after the McCunes left. Other private letters from Britain to Church authorities in Utah echoed this missive, citing "the great weight that the testimonies of Utahnian ladies bore in this land" and the way they helped supplant "old erroneous ideas" with a more balanced view.¹⁷

SETTING THE PLAN IN MOTION

In the weeks following the First Presidency's March 11, 1898, decision to call sister missionaries, word began to spread. At a reception held by the Young Men and Young Women Mutual Improvement Association boards, President George Q. Cannon announced, "It has been decided to call some of our wise and prudent women into the missionary field,"¹⁸ and spoke of the contributions of Elizabeth and others. Joseph F. Smith also spoke to the Young Women leaders about this "grand work that lay before the daughters of Zion."¹⁹

At the April 1898 Conference, President Cannon announced to a broader church audience the decision to regularly call sister missionaries. He spoke of a woman that "was so pleased at meeting one of our sisters—an intelligent woman, and a woman that did not look as though she was a poor, downtrodden slave—that she entered the Church. No doubt, it was due to the fact that she had found that the women were as intelligent, as presentable and as ladylike in their sphere as the gentlemen were in their sphere." Cannon noted that while sisters could not administer ordinances, "they can bear testimony; they can teach; they can distribute tracts, and they can do a great many things [to] assist in the propagation of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."²⁰



*“It has been
decided to call
some of our wise and
prudent women into the
missionary field.”*

—PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON

First Counselor in the First Presidency
March 11, 1898



On April 1, 1898, Amanda Inez Knight and Lucy Jane Brimhall were set apart to be the first certified and single female proselyting missionaries in the history of the Church. They were both assigned to the European Mission, and within three days of their April 21 arrival, they began to speak in branch meetings, street meetings, and conferences, heralded as “real live Mormon women.” The two sisters gave particular attention to their duty to visit “strangers having strange ideas of our people.”²¹ Knight and Brimhall were the first of tens of thousands of women to serve as missionaries in a tradition that continues today.

Elizabeth McCune would have further opportunities to engage in missionary work in the ensuing years.²² She later offered this perspective on her experience as a forerunner²³: “While abroad I always had a burning desire in my heart to give our Father’s children what I knew to be the Truth. Wherever I went to visit and had an opportunity to converse with the people I would lead up to this, the uppermost topic in my mind. Often I had the privilege of proclaiming the Gospel to people who had never before heard of it. I asked myself, at times, ‘Why do I feel so, I am not a missionary?’ I told my daughter one day that I believed the time was not far distant when women would be called on missions. I often felt if I were commissioned of God as the young men were, I could have gone into every house and entered into a quiet religious chat with the people; leaving with each one my earnest testimony.”²⁴ □

1 Joseph W. McMurrin, “Lady Missionaries,” *Young Woman’s Journal* 15 (Dec. 1904), 539–40.

2 *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 11 Mar. 1898.

3 Susa Young Gates, “Biographical Sketches, Elizabeth Claridge McCune,” *Young Woman’s Journal* 9 (Aug. 1898), 339.

4 Sarah Fay, age 17; Lottie Jacketta, age 12–13; Matthew Marcus, age 8; Elizabeth Claridge, age 5–6.

5 Gates 340.

6 Ibid.

7 “Golden Wedding of Mr. and Mrs. A. W. McCune,” *Relief Society Magazine* 9 (Aug. 1922), 405.

8 See “From Various Missionary Fields,” *Millennial Star* 58:35 (27 Aug. 1896), 555; “Editorials,” *Millennial Star* 59:47 (25 Nov. 1897), 745–6. During his anti-Mormon

“performances,” Jarman was promoting his lurid “exposé” of Mormonism, *Uncle Sam’s Abscess or Hell upon Earth* (Exeter, England, 1884).

9 Gates 341

10 Gates 342.

11 Ibid.

12 “London Conference,” *Millennial Star* 59:43 (28 Oct. 1897), 684.

13 Gates 342.

14 Gates 343.

15 “Nottingham Conference,” *Millennial Star* 59:45 (11 Nov. 1897), 714–5. Raymond was released after this meeting and assigned to labor in London.

16 Gates 343.

17 “Our First Lady Missionaries,” *Millennial Star* 60:30 (28 Jul. 1898), 472.

18 “Biographical Sketches, Jennie Brimhall and Inez Knight,” *Young Woman’s Journal* 9 (Jun. 1898), 245.

19 “Our First Lady Missionaries,” 473.

20 George Q. Cannon, *Conference Report*, April 1898, 6–8.

21 “A Letter from Bristol,” *Millennial Star* 60:30 (28 Jul. 1898), 476.

22 When Elizabeth McCune returned to England with Emmeline B. Wells, Susa Young Gates, and other prominent Utah women in 1899 to attend the International Women’s Congress in London, they toured several branches (including Nottingham and Dover), speaking on the roles, condition, and potential of LDS women. See “Abstract of Correspondence,” *Millennial Star* 61:30 (27 Jul. 1899), 474; “Abstract of Correspondence,” *Millennial Star* 61:31 [3 Aug. 1899], 489; “Two Weeks with the Sisters,” *Millennial Star* 61:32 (10 Aug. 1899), 509–12.

23 Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, vol. 4 (Salt Lake City, 1904), 609.

24 Gates 339–43.



THE OPENING OF THE MISSION FIELD TO Single Sisters

BY ELIZABETH MAKI

Church History Department

In the late 19th century, with the Church firmly established in the secluded valleys of Utah, rumors about just what the Latter-day Saints' lives were like in those valleys ran rampant in other parts of the world.

A few years had passed since the 1890 Manifesto that marked the beginning of the end of the practice of plural marriage in the LDS Church.¹ The practice had led to popular portrayals of downtrodden, enslaved Mormon women, and those reports had not ended with the Manifesto. While people elsewhere occasionally saw Latter-day Saint men preaching as missionaries, they could only imagine what Mormon women were really like.

One LDS couple who visited the Eastern United States returned to Utah with reports of "frequent expressions among those who had not joined the Church to this effect: 'Well, we have seen the Mormon Elders, but we have not seen the Mormon women; we would like to see some Mormon women, and see what kind of people they are.'"²

In time, these rumors began taking their toll on the Church's missionary work.³ So, in 1897, the presidency of the European Mission appealed to the presiding authorities of the Church to send them some "lady missionaries."

LDS women had been set apart for missions since 1865, and many more had served even before

Chester, by Louise Ingram Rayner

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that with no more formal sanction than a blessing. Yet with few exceptions, those missionaries had been married women accompanying their husbands into the mission field. What the European Mission sought were dedicated female missionaries, citing "instances in which our sisters gained attention in England where the Elders could scarcely gain a hearing."⁴

Similar appeals were heard from mission leaders in the United States, and by the April 1898 General Conference, Church authorities had acknowledged their desires and given the plan a cautious sanction.

"There will be an opportunity, doubtless, for women who are capable and who desire to do good, to go out, under proper conditions," President George Q. Cannon said in that Conference. "They can bear testimony; they can teach; they can distribute tracts, and they can do a great many things that would assist in the propagation of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."⁵

SINGLE SISTER MISSIONARIES

It was in that climate that Jennie Brimhall's bishop learned of Jennie's plans to go on a European vacation with her friend, Inez Knight, in 1898. Jennie was 23 and Inez was a 22-year-old Brigham Young Academy

student from Provo, Utah, when they planned their trip. Two of Inez's brothers, Will and Ray Knight, were serving missions there, and Will was Jennie's fiancé. Not only could they see the sights of Europe, the women thought, they could also visit Will and Ray.⁶

But Bishop J.B. Keeler had a great deal more in mind.

What if their European vacation could be transformed into a call to serve the Lord? When the bishop asked Jennie what she thought, she said she would serve the Lord if asked. So he wrote to LDS Church President Wilford Woodruff with the proposal, and shortly thereafter the women's stake president was sent a letter au-



thorizing him to set apart Inez Knight and Jennie Brimhall as missionaries to Great Britain.⁷

There was no precedent for Inez and Jennie to follow: young, single women had never before been called to serve missions for the LDS Church. Yet the women accepted the assignment and were set apart on April 1, 1898. The next day, they set out on the long journey to Liverpool—Inez indulging in tears as the train moved her from Provo to Springville, but after travelling that far she felt “quite reconciled” to the coming change.

Once they arrived in Liverpool, the women received no formal training. There were no strict rules or guidelines like those governing missionaries today. Indeed, Inez and Jennie were setting out on an adventure and establishing a pioneering model that generations of LDS women would learn from and follow.

And expectations were high: shortly after they arrived, a member of their mission’s presidency announced in a Saturday night street meeting in Oldham, England, that “real live Mormon women” would be speaking in church meetings the next day.⁸ Whatever the people of Oldham had heard about Mormon women in America, Inez and Jennie were about to show them firsthand what a “real live Mormon” woman was really like.

Inez knew her presence on that street corner was significant, prompting “a sickly feeling” when the mission leader’s words publicly reminded her of all she would represent when she opened her mouth as a missionary for the Church.⁹ Yet when the next evening came, Inez spoke just the same—“mid fears & tremblings,” she wrote, “but did surprise myself.”¹⁰

The success of her first address as a missionary was a welcome confidence boost, but it would be



Jennie Brimhall



Inez Knight

Inez Knight’s journal of her mission years contains numerous references to the anti-Mormon league in Bristol that staged street meetings to preach against the LDS Church, “challenging any one to deny their statements.” Inez told of one day in 1898 when she and her companion, Liza Chipman, listened as their antagonists “stated that Mormon Elders came here for no other purpose than to entice women to Utah. & that they were slaves to the men & if they did not do as they told them their throats were cut.”

In January 1899, Inez and Liza encountered a mob in front of the local mission headquarters, where they were going to visit the family that kept the house. Inez wrote:

“As we went in they hissed & shouted at us, & after we were in rocks were thrown thick & fast in the windows until not a glass remained in the house.”¹¹ Ray [Inez’s brother and a fellow missionary] finally took us girls home, but the mob followed us. & threw rocks & mud & sticks at us all the way to the police station opposite Trinity Church. On our way we met Bros. James & Haddock who went back with us to the police station. . . . The chief police went to our home with us.”¹²

¹ Inez Knight Allen, diary of Inez Knight Allen, 1898–1899, BYU Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections, 120.
² Allen 125.

some time before Inez was able to cast off the case of nerves that came with such an important duty. Through the first few months of her mission, she confided in her journal the intense anxiety she experienced each time she spoke. "Attended and spoke in street meeting," she wrote on one occasion. "Regular cottage meeting we took part in. Still it seemed to me I was worse frightened every time I was called upon to talk. Oh those fearful trembling feelings I shall never forget, if I ever am free from them."¹¹

Jennie Brimhall returned home to Utah from her mission after a few months, due to poor health, but Inez served in Great Britain for 26 months, usually with a companion but at times on her own.¹²

In a letter to the *Young Woman's Journal* printed in April 1899, Inez underscored the focus and faith that helped her rise above her trepidation as an ambassador for the Lord, and, indirectly, for Latter-day Saint women: "One thing remains the same with me," she wrote, "[and] that is the fear

and trembling which accompanies our work. The Lord is abundantly blessing us in our labors, and although we do not always have clear sailing . . . yet we rejoice in the work."

Inez demonstrated repeatedly that she was willing to act in spite of her fears, keeping her focus on the work she was sent to accomplish. At a street meeting in the fall of 1898, she noted how the words of her male counterparts were largely ignored by the crowd. "So we sang again," she wrote in her journal that night, and "the announcement that we were L.D.S. or Mormons & that a sister would speak drew a crowd & I talked about 15 minutes to an eager crowd. Crowd anxious for tracts."¹³

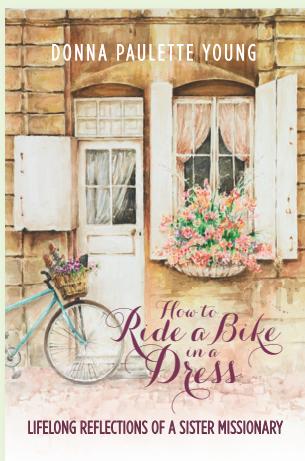
In time, Inez seemed to overcome her trepidation. In part, she attributed her growing confidence to the faith of her fellow missionaries. at one point she noted in her journal that "I spoke in the evening to large crowd, but was blessed with prayers of other missionaries."¹⁴

Inez's increased confidence came through to her audience. In September 1898, she attended a street

Online Resources:

The Early Mormon Missionaries Database at history.lds.org/missionary

The Church has provided an amazing new database of men and women who served proselytizing missions between 1830–1930.



How to Ride a Bike in a Dress blog at rideabikeinadress.com

This blog is a companion website to the new book by Donna Paulette Young, "How to Ride a Bike in a Dress: Lifelong Reflections of a Sister Missionary." A portion of the proceeds from this book will be used to help support missionaries who are in need of financial aid for their missions.

"With careful attention to detail and deep insight, Donna has captured the essence of a sister missionary experience. This book will not only resonate with returned missionaries, but will provide realistic and bright expectations for sisters preparing to leave." —Pam Turley, returned missionary, mother to nine missionaries

meeting in Bedminster, near Bristol. With a “good crowd” already gathered, she was called upon to speak.

“With the help of the Lord,” Inez wrote, “I spoke 20 min. At the close one stranger said ‘God bless your good mission.’”¹⁵

Inez returned home from her mission in the summer of 1900. Initially, she’d had a hard time thinking of her assignment as “being much more than a pleasure trip.”¹⁶ Yet, years later, a member of the European Mission presidency who was there when she served reported that the “lady missionaries” he had worked with in Great Britain completed a work that “was in every way satisfactory.”

“Whenever I had the pleasure of listening to one of them bear testimony to the truth of the Gospel, and talk of their Utah sisters, and defend the women of Mormondom, I felt their words were far more convincing than anything that could be said by the men,” Joseph McMurrin wrote. “I believe there is room for a good many sisters to do effective missionary service.”¹⁷ □

1 Kelly Lelegren, “‘Real, live Mormon women’: Understanding the Role of Early Twentieth-Century LDS Lady Missionaries,” MA thesis, Utah State Univ. (2009), 17.

2 George Q. Cannon, address, *Official Report of the 68th Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April, 1898* (Salt Lake City, 1898), 6–8.

3 See “From Various Missionary Fields,” *Millennial Star* 58:35 (27 Aug. 1896): 555.; “Editorials,” *Millennial Star* 59:47 (25 Nov. 1897): 745–6.

4 Calvin Seymour Kunz, “A history of female missionary activity in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1898” (thesis, Brigham Young Univ., 1976), 35.

5 Cannon 6–8.

6 Lelegren 23.

7 Orson Whitney, *History of Utah*, (1916), 614.

8 Inez Knight Allen, “Diary of Inez Knight Allen, 1898–1899,” digital collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young Univ., 17.

9 Ibid.

10 Allen 18.

11 Allen 22.

12 Lelegren 45.

13 Allen 75.

14 Allen 20.

15 Allen 73.

16 Ibid.

17 Joseph W. McMurrin, “Lady Missionaries,” *Young Woman’s Journal*, 15 (Dec. 1904): 539–41.

The Experience of Married Women Missionaries

varied greatly depending on their age and circumstances. Sister Ida Roberts and her husband Edgar Thomas Roberts were newlyweds when they were called in 1898 to serve together in Samoa. She gave birth to two children while on her mission to Samoa, both of whom died before the age of two.

Hattie Nye was 51 years old when called with her husband to California, bringing her youngest daughter, Hattie Elizabeth, age 9.

Others called to California were young marrieds, and only one had a child at the time of her call.

Blanche Woodruff Daynes, daughter of Wilford Woodruff served a mission in England with her husband and young son Donald in 1899 and 1900. Her letters underscore the challenges of serving with an infant: “The other day I made an attempt at tracting; took Donald in his cart, and visited fourteen houses. This was as much as I could do in one day. I am not sure that I did any good, but I still gave a few souls



a chance to know a little something of our Gospel. I haven't been out since, and I don't know when I shall go again, but it is my intention to do some tracting this summer, if I can with baby." (Blanche Woodruff Daynes, British Mission, quoted in "Our Girls," *Young Woman's Journal* 11: 6 (June 1900), 279.

The difficulties of serving a full time mission as a young married couple, often with children, quickly became apparent to mission presidents as well as to General Authorities recruiting missionaries. Their awareness is reflected in the tapering number of married women missionaries:

from 1898–1903

married women comprised over 60% of the female missionary force.

60%

During the subsequent decade the balance shifted dramatically:

from 1904–1908

only about 40% of sister missionaries were married, and

40%

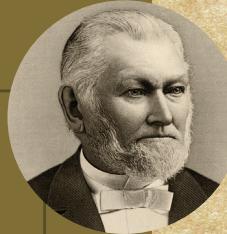
from 1909–1914

their number dwindled to less than 30%. (Missionary Registers, Books C and D, Church History Library.) □

30%



See "Old Mormon Missionary Tracts" at copycatcollector.blogspot.com



PRESIDENT WILFORD WOODRUFF'S

1898 decision surprised many. One of the first women to serve wrote, "We first heard, with some astonishment, that the young ladies of Zion ought to prepare themselves for missions to the world."



1900s

— 1902:

27

women went on missions.

— 1915: THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

told stake presidents, "We are greatly in need of lady missionaries in the United States Missions." The women were to be "physically and financially able to perform missions."

— 1917:

668

Young Woman's Journal 28 (1917):2

women served as missionaries from 1912 to 1917.

— 1918: The number of male missionaries decreased as males were drafted for the Great War; during this year women comprised 38% of all missionaries.

— 1930s AND 1940s:

MEN AND WOMEN Missionaries sang and preached on street corners, handed out pamphlets, rented public halls for illustrated lectures on Mormonism, or held cottage meetings (taught people in their homes).

There were no standardized lessons. See Jessie L. Embry, "LDS Sister Missionaries: An Oral History Response," 1910–70, *Journal of Mormon History* 23: 1 (Spring 1997), 100–39.

Sisters Sharing the Gospel of Peace

by Susan Lofgren

While speaking at the 68th Annual Conference of the Church held on April 6th, 1898, President George Q. Cannon, First Counselor in the First Presidency shared the following:

"A letter came from a president of a Stake, saying there was a young couple in his Stake who were about to be married; but the young man had been called on a mission, and they delayed their marriage till they could ask some counsel. The young man and the young woman were both morally and physically capable of going on a mission, and they had sufficient means also. The question was asked, Would it be right for them to get married, and for the young lady to accompany her husband? The First Presidency wrote back, 'Yes, if she is such a young woman as you describe; let her be set apart as a missionary and go with her husband and preach the Gospel as well as she can.'"

Lettie Ann Campbell

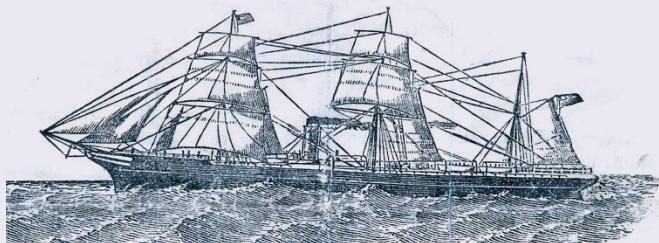
It was in the spring of 1898 when Chester Frederick Campbell was called on a mission to Great Britain. Engaged to Lettie Ann Dewey, Chester was counseled by Stake President George Osmond to serve a mission with his bride. They were married April 12, 1898 in the Salt Lake Temple. Lettie received her call from the Deweyville Ward, Box Elder Stake, and was set apart July 8, 1898 by A. O. Woodruff. Lettie was only 22 when the newlyweds left for England.

In the May 1898 *Young Woman's Journal*, Susa Gates writes: "Another woman missionary is a Miss Dewey of Box Elder Stake who married a Brother Campbell of Star Valley, and the two left Salt Lake City just after the April Conference. Sister Campbell



will also write us occasionally." (See "Girl Missionaries," *YWJ* 9:5 [May 1898], 237.)

On June 21, 1899 the Campbells' first child, a daughter, was born in Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, England, and was named Victoria after Queen Victoria of England. In August 1899 Mrs. Campbell was honorably released to return to her mother's home in Deweyville. As the steamship carrying Lettie and her infant daughter neared the east coast of the United States, it struck an iceberg. The September 5, 1899 *New York Times* reported, "The Anchor Line steamship *City of Rome*, which sailed from Glasgow



Saturday, August 26, and Moville, Ireland, the same day, with 993 passengers and a crew of 297 men, all told, reached here yesterday, a few hours late, all aboard well and giving thanks that they were able to tell the story of a collision with an iceberg." Lettie and her daughter arrived safely in New York.

New York Times, September 5, 1899

OCEAN LINER HITS ICEBERG

City of Rome Has Mishap in the Fog Off Newfoundland Banks.

SHIP ONLY SLIGHTLY DAMAGED

Many Passengers Aboard Frightened, but None Hurt—Boat Going Slow, but It Was a Close Call.

The Anchor Line steamship *City of Rome*, which sailed from Glasgow Saturday, Aug. 26, and Moville, Ireland, the same day, with 993 passengers and a crew of 297 men, all told, reached here yesterday, a few hours late, all aboard well and giving thanks that they were able to tell the story of a collision with an iceberg. "Twenty feet to port," said one of the ship's officers, "and we would have cleared it entirely." "Twenty feet to the right," said a passenger, "and we might not have been here to tell the tale."

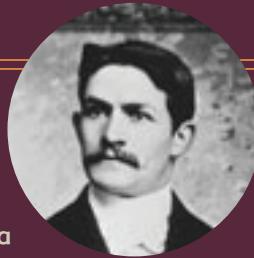
As it was, the big steamer struck the ice a glancing blow, and so far as can be seen or learned the only damage she suffered was the bending up of her bobstay and the carrying away of a fragment of her figurehead. This is a monumental figure in bronze of Julius Caesar wearing a laurel wreath. The right forearm, folded against the breast, was broken off at the elbow.

The encounter with the ice occurred when the passengers were at dinner on Thursday night last, the steamer being then in a fog

From Huntsville,
Utah, David O.

McKay also served as a missionary in Great Britain.

The *Deseret News* reported: "In 1899, McKay returned to the United States on a ship, which, like the 'Titanic' 13 years later, hit an iceberg. Fortunately, his captain reversed engines just before the collision and turned the ship around just in time to avert a tragedy, making it possible for young McKay to become one of the most influential of LDS leaders" (Dennis Lythgoe, "Missionary's Diaries are a Legacy," *Deseret News*, 30 Jan. 2000.)



THE YOUNG WOMAN'S JOURNAL.

«ORGAN OF THE Y. L. M. I. ASSOCIATIONS.»

"A Missionary Letter from Lincoln, England"
YWJ Vol 10, (1899), pg 331-3

Dear Readers—

Perhaps you would like to hear from one of your number who is nearly seven thousand miles from home laboring as a missionary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Lincoln, England, is my present field of labor. It is the largest city of Lincolnshire, and is a pretty and historic city, having sixty thousand inhabitants now, but in 1821 there were not ten thousand people living here. Yes, it is pretty for an English city, but the difference between Lincoln and our lovely city of Salt Lake can not be imagined. No man inspired of God ever laid out these streets, allowing ample room for walks and traffic. . . .

There are many places of interest here, but time will not permit me to write more at present. I must not neglect my missionary work. I do a certain amount of studying every day, for I, like many of our girls, am not as well versed in the Scriptures as I should be. I realize now what I have lost in slighting my *Guide*¹ work.

Dear girls, let me impress upon you the necessity of studying the Scriptures and getting a thorough understanding of the Gospel you have embraced. Do find out for yourselves why you are Latter-day Saints. Ask God in faith and humility to help you to understand what you read, and He will answer your prayers. Do not forget to thank Him for inspiring the writers of the *Guide* with the Holy Spirit, and show your appreciation of the same by being well prepared in each lesson you are assigned from that book. Pray for all those who are sent to the nations of the earth to proclaim His everlasting Gospel.

If you think it is no trial just imagine yourself in a strange city going from door to door with Gospel tracts, being received by some and shunned and slighted by others; or try [to imagine] standing on a street corner singing, praying and preaching to the people. Sometimes there are three hundred listeners, [sometimes] not fifty. imagine how it would be after you have, by the help of God, explained the Gospel you are advocating, and have added your humble testimony of its truth to have some minister interrupt the meeting and say, "These people are impostors! All the men or Elders want is to coax your girls and women off to Utah to become the wives of men who already have sixty."

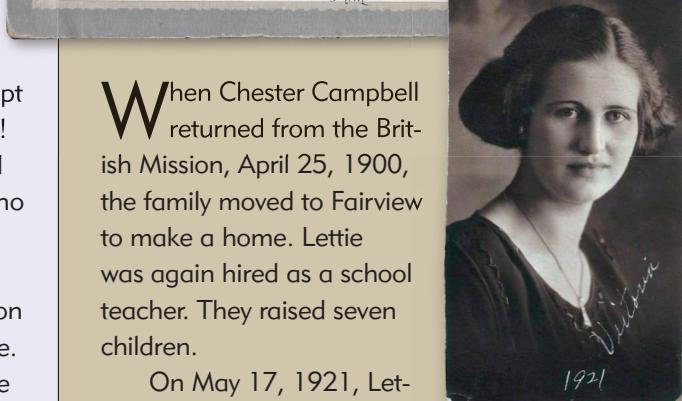
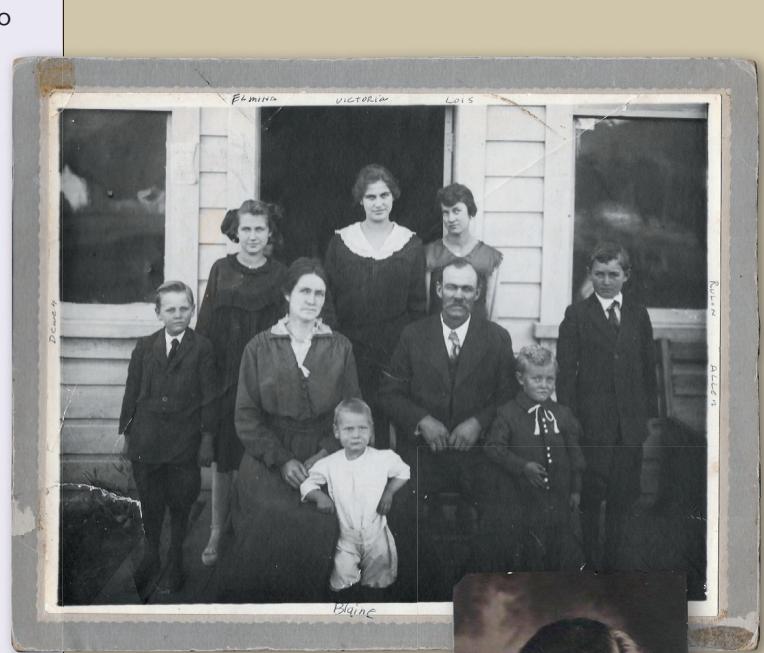
This not being enough, then to have tracts of a very immoral character which are against our religion distributed, thus arousing the crowd to mob violence. Then they will begin to hoot and crowd, and you are finally carried and jostled to your own gate—through which you escape the crowd by the aid of a policeman. This has been my experience since I arrived in Lincoln. By God's help we have braved it well. We have made many friends, and some are earnestly

investigating the Gospel which if they will only accept will bring joy and satisfaction in this life, and exaltation in the life to come.

With greetings of love to you all. I am your sister in the Gospel of peace,

—*Lettie Dewey Campbell*

1 The *Guide* was a lesson manual for young women first printed in pamphlet form in 1899 by the Y.L.M.I.A. and is referred to several times in *The Young Woman's Journal* from 1890 onward.



When Chester Campbell returned from the British Mission, April 25, 1900, the family moved to Fairview to make a home. Lettie was again hired as a school teacher. They raised seven children.

On May 17, 1921, Lettie's oldest daughter, Lettie Victoria (born in England during Chester's and Lettie's mission) was set apart to serve a mission in California. Victoria was called from Lincoln, Wyoming, at the age of 21, and was set apart by J. Golden Kimball.



*Victoria
Campbell
and Marita
Blood,
mission
compan-
ions in the
California
Mission*

Marita Robins Blood

At the age of 23, Marita Blood from Kaysville, Davis, Utah, was also called to the California Mission. Serving from December 1921 to January 1924, Marita was one of Victoria's companions.

Marita writes: "In November 1921, I was called to serve a Mission in California. This Mission then covered California, Nevada, and Arizona. I remember how cold and bleak the weather was the latter part of October through November. It was unusually cold for that time of year with winds and cold weather. . . .

"The time was short and I had so much to do to prepare for my mission and we were to leave December 7 at 8:48 am by train from Salt Lake City. I was set apart as a Missionary in the Church Office Building on December 6, 1921 by Elder George Albert Smith. There were 43 Missionaries in the group going to various fields of labor.

"The morning of December 7, we left our home and drove to Salt Lake City. It was a cold, wintry morning, dark and smoky when we reached the Union Pacific Station in Salt Lake. Two things my Father said to me that morning were 'to be of good cheer' and also 'if I couldn't say anything good about polygamy, not to say anything about it at all.' We all had a good time traveling to California. I am sure we were a very frightened group of boys and girls. At that time there were no Mission Homes or other

preparation for Missionaries. We found ourselves depending on a higher power than ourselves.

"We arrived in Los Angeles and were met by the Elder and Lady Missionaries. We attended a Conference and a banquet. I was so tired I hardly remembered going to them. My companion and I, Sister Melba Cropper, were taken to the home of Brother and Sister Sant where we spent two or three days before our assignment to the field of labor. We were so very tired. It seemed we had only been asleep for a very few minutes when we were awaken[ed] by a terrifying roar and crash. We looked out the window and saw a large oil well had burst into flames. We were to learn this occurs quite frequently. We found we were in a home near Beacon Hill where many, many oil wells were. I was assigned to Santa Ana to labor with Sister Katherine Calder of Vernal, Utah. We were there about 8 months when her mother became very ill and died very suddenly, and Sister Calder was sent home. I was then sent to Long Beach and my companion was Sister Victoria Campbell.

"I served in Santa Monica and Ocean Park as a companion to Sister Florence Peck. Her health was poor and she was sent home and again I was without a companion. A young girl in the branch, Sister Violet Bennett, was given to me as a companion and we worked together for 6 months. Her parents were members of the Ocean Park Branch. While I was there, the first Stake was organized and Brother John McCoun [actually, George W. McCune] . . . was made the [Stake] President and Brother Stohl was made Bishop of the New Ward.

"My health was not too good so at the advice of Dr Harding, the Missionary Physician, I was transferred to the San Joaquin Valley with Headquarters in Fresno. He said higher altitude would be conducive to better health. I spent 11 months there. The winter was nice but the summer was very hot, 118 degrees in the shade. Joseph Hansen was District President then when I arrived. George Aposhian, Elders Shermanian and Tavoian were working among the Armenian people of which there were many in Fresno. I served there until January 1924 when I was released after more than two years in the Mission Field." □



“Many an instance has driven home the fact of the sweet-ness, potency, and permanency of the work of our lady missionaries.”

—DAVID O. MCKAY

Our Lady Missionaries



During the fall of 1920, Elder David O. McKay of the Quorum of the Twelve received a surprising and significant assignment: to tour the missions of the Pacific with the possibility of going on to Africa and Europe. Elder McKay was instructed to "observe the operation of the Church in remote areas while strengthening and motivating members and leaders alike" (Francis M. Gibbons, David O. McKay: Apostle to the World [1986], 100); his traveling companion was Hugh J. Cannon, editor of the Improvement Era. The two men left home on December 4, 1920, and their nine-month tour of missions in the Pacific included Japan, Korea, Manchuria (China), Hawaii, Tahiti, New Zealand, Australia, Tonga, and Samoa. They also visited the Holy Land and Western Europe before returning home in late 1921. This article by Elder McKay appeared in the Young Woman's Journal, 32 (1921), 503.

BY DAVID O. MCKAY, of the Council of the Twelve

Before the first two choice young women, Sisters Booth and Chipman, came to the Scottish conference, twenty-two years ago, I had been averse to the idea of calling "Lady Missionaries." The success and excellency of these young women modified my views; still I entertained "ma doots aboot" the advisability of sending young girls out to meet the scorn and contumely of a prejudiced world. There was no doubt about the great good accomplished by these first two lady missionaries in Scotland; but then, were they not exceptional girls? Would not others with less ability have failed where these succeeded? Thus in my mind the cautiousness of my Scotch ancestry manifested itself, and kept me from accepting the idea "in toto," even with a convincing demonstration before me. Truly the old Scotchman prayed wisely when he said,

"O Lord keep me richt, for ye ken hoo hard it is for me to change when I'm wrang."

Well, the experience of the intervening years has changed me; for many an instance has driven home the fact of the sweetness, potency, and permanency of the work of our lady missionaries. But the full realization of the good they are accomplishing, and of the possibilities of their accomplishing even more, did not come to me until Brother Cannon and I entered upon this tour of the missions. Almost without exception, the women whom we have met in their "fields of labor" have proved to be not only equal but superior to the men in ability, keen insight, and energetic service. This statement is prompted not by a sense of gallantry, but as the result of careful observation of missionary activities. It is to be hoped, however,

that true gallantry will prompt the choice elders whom we've met to accept it in the true light of the spirit in which it is written. It must be remembered, too, that there have been only comparatively few women and many men.



John Q. Adams was the mission president of the Samoan Mission 1920–1923. His wife Thurza Amelia Tingey Adams is the sister missionary spoken of by Elder McKay. Daughters, L to R: Maurine Adams, Beth Penberthy, and Ruth Meeks (see familysearch.org). Elder David O. McKay and Hugh J. Cannon pictured left with Thurza Adams

Be that as it may, the sweet, self-denying labors and unselfish devotion of these few call forth the prayer, "God bless the Lady Missionaries wherever they may be!"

A missionary's life, at best, is not all sunshine; and clouds in the shape of unpleasant experiences and grave difficulties hover over the lives of the women as well as of the men in the field. And storm clouds and danger that leave men unmoved sometimes strike terror to the tender, responsive hearts of the women, and difficulties at which men can laugh might prove annoying if not painful to their gentler companions; but, when it comes to the acid test of some difficulties and trials, I am free to acknowledge woman's superior heroism.

A SEA TEST

At 5:30 p.m., May 20th, we were scheduled to sail from Apia, Upolu, to Pago Pago, Tutuila, on a little cargo schooner that guaranteed a possible arrival at our destination at an indefinite time in the future providing we were favored with a smooth sea! It had rained all day, coming down at intervals in torrential sheets, so the prospects for a pleasant voyage were anything but bright; for we knew we had to sit or lie on a crowded deck all night. Occasionally, some of us had experienced somewhat gloomy forebodings during the day, but these were very greatly modified by the prayer service held just prior to our departure from the mission house. Though it was still raining we felt an assurance that all would be well.

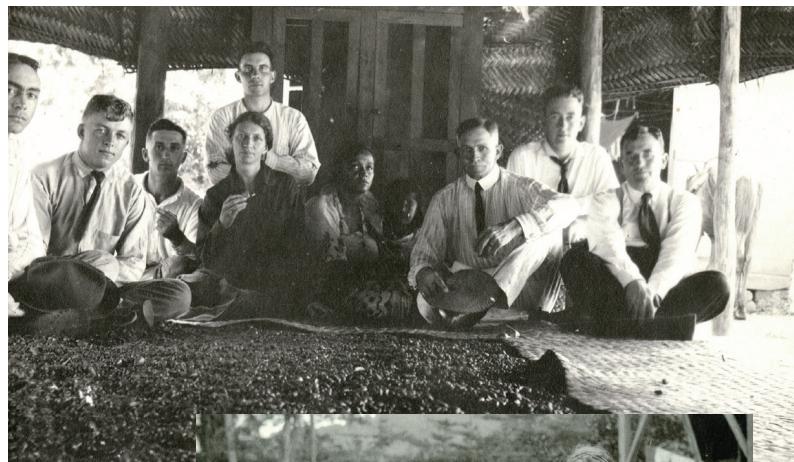
Two lady missionaries, Sisters Thurza Adams and Retta Griffiths were in the party. The men's good nights to elders remaining at Pesega were sincerely but cheerfully spoken; but when the women stooped to kiss the three little girls good-bye, and the crying mother had to put remonstrating baby Beth into the native girl Elisa's arms it was plainly evident that this . . . impending missionary duty was costing the women more than the men.

Fortunately, almost miraculously it seemed, as soon as the gasoline engine in our boat started, the rain stopped, and we had a perfectly dry voyage during the night, although it began to rain



Above: David O. McKay arriving on the boat to Samoa. Below: Missionaries pictured with McKay and Hugh J. Cannon. On the third row—behind McKay—are Thurza, John Adams and their children. To the right of John is an unidentified woman. Seen several times pictured next to Thurza, this woman is possibly Retta Griffiths.





again as soon as we entered the conference house in Pago Pago.

But even a comparatively smooth sea seemed rough for our little six-ton craft, which bobbed up and down and sidewise as though it were only a wash tub. The result was that before the cloudy twilight completely obscured the shore line of Upolu, we were all huddled on the deck, lying in grim silence. We all knew the symptoms; and each one lay harboring—with approaching sea-sickness—the fear that he or she would be the first to rush for the rail! Unfortunately it was Sister Adams; and I being nearest her felt it at least my duty to render her aid. Before reaching her, however, a stronger feeling seized me, and I turned and sought the opposite rail. Our “duet” was but the signal for the “chorus” that followed. Everybody, except President Coombs and Elder Stott, was sick, even Bro. Cannon. . . . Fortunately, Sister Griffiths had only a slight attack, and her tender solicitations through the night made life more bearable for her husband and any other woebegone passengers unto whom she administered kind acts. It was a noticeable fact that though Sister Adams was the sickest amongst us, she was continually forgetting and neglecting herself for the comfort and convenience of others. . . . Thus these good women continued,—now adjusting this one’s

covering, now arranging another’s pillow (life belt)—angels of mercy all through the night. . . . This trip was difficult for the men, it was hardship for the women; yet they endured it even more bravely and much more pleasantly than their stalwart companions. . . .

With the sleepless night behind us, and the sea sickness fading into memory, these lady missionaries were still facing a journey which to most women at home would not be an easy task [even] under favorable conditions. Twelve miles of muddy rocky road, impassable to the little Ford truck on Tutuila, lay between Pago Pago and Mapusaga. The Sisters could either walk the distance, or ride limping, tenderfooted ponies. Because she was eager to be the first to reach Mapusaga that she might prepare for the comfort of those who should follow, Sister Adams rode. Sister Griffiths and Sister Muir, who had welcomed us at Pago Pago, were given horses also, but walked most of the way, and carried, much of the time, Sister Muir’s eight-month-old baby. Vainly, we protested; vainly, tried to induce the Japanese [driver] to run his Ford five miles; vainly tried to secure some other kind of conveyance! The only thing left was either to ride a horse or walk. The women said they were going to conference if they had to wade in mud to the ankles. Of course, when a woman makes up her mind in that fashion, a sensible man knows enough to let her go. And go they did, and arrived at the end of the rough and muddy journey before dusk, somewhat limp, but laughing and happy!

Then it was I learned that such experiences either on sea or land are not uncommon in the lives of these Samoan missionaries, not the least memorable of which was Sister Griffith’s first trip to Saumiati. It was taken about three months after [her] landing at Apia. The fear of sailing in a frail row boat was unlesioned by experience, and strangeness that overwhelms one in an entirely new country among a strange people, was still upon her. It was with feelings of timidity, therefore, that she stepped into a boat rowed by eight natives, to go fifteen miles up the coast.

It was 6:30 p.m. and the approach of darkness did not tend to allay her anxiety. There was another

woman passenger that night, who, seeing with true womanly instinct the American girl's timidity, approached her hesitatingly, and slipping her dark but gentle arm around the girl's slender waist, gave her a hug that produced a sense of true companionship. Later when the little craft was riding the crest of a wave or hidden in the trough of the sea, and Elders Griffiths and Stott were both lying in the bottom of the boat sick, the caress of that kind Samoan woman was truly a haven of security! No wonder Sister Griffiths refers to "Viga" as her Samoan mother!

When the boat arrived at Fusi, 10 p.m., and the row boys had carried the passengers ashore on their backs, this usually frail little woman, Viga, and the two Elders began a five-mile walk over a mountain dugway to Sauniatu. Often the overhanging foliage made the road so black that Sister Griffiths had to hold to one end of a cane to be guided along the single trail. Thus, they felt rather than saw their way through the darkness until midnight, when they arrived at their destination.

I have since been over that road, and can well imagine the feelings of a Utah girl who traveled it at midnight after having had her nerves racked by a three-and-a-half hour ride in a row boat on a rough sea. But there's never a word of complaint from the lady missionary.

A TRIP TO SAVAI'I

Following the incident mentioned above, Sisters Adams and Griffiths answered a call to go to Savai'i, a distance by boat of about sixty miles. The experience of our night on the "Marstal" from Apia to Pago Pago was duplicated; only in this instance Sister Adams had her three little girls with her, all of whom were sick. And, of course President Adams was [as well], for he always resigns himself to his inevitable fate. To aggravate his discomfiture, he and his companions had to lie on kerosene cans. When morning finally came, and they reached their port of destination, they were subjected to a four-and-a half-hour wait before they could land. . . .

CROSSING TREACHEROUS STREAMS

But perhaps the most dangerous incident was that experienced by Sister Adams when she



accompanied her husband on a tour of Upolu. It was in the month of December, 1920. They had stopped all night with a native brother, Elder Kippen Su'a, who lives at Salesateli. Knowing the treachery that lurked in the wide river that lay between Salesateli and the next village, Su'a furnished the missionaries a guide as they started on their journey in the morning. They found the river, even at low tide, almost impassable on horseback, but the guide led them out toward the ocean; and following a submerged sand bar, they crossed in safety.

Upon their return trip from Malaela, one week later, they came to this place, fortunately, when the tide was at low ebb; so, using coconut trees lodged as debris for their guide, they assumed the risk of crossing without assistance. As President Adams's horse stopped to drink, Sister Thurza went some distance ahead. A half-heavy rain made the surface of the water ripply, so the bottom could not be seen. She thought she was on safe ground until all at once she felt the sand slipping from under her horse's feet, and before she could realize what was happening, horse and rider were submerged. As her head came to the surface, she heard her husband cry out, "Hold to the saddle!" This she did for her very life. Fortunately it proved to be [only] a small hole out of which the horse swam to the sand bar; but if he had struck quicksand, frequently found in such places, the results might have proved fatal.

Not infrequently is it necessary for this little missionary mother to take her children with her. In such instances Maurin, eight, rides behind her father; Ruth, six, behind her mother; and Beth,

"On May 31, near the end of their month-long visit to Samoa, the elders participated in a particularly spiritual time at Sauniatu. . . . At its conclusion the brethren spent over an hour blessing babies, as well as the afflicted of all ages."¹



"The spirit of the Saints and strangers and government officials is becoming better. The blessings pronounced upon these islands by [Elder McKay] cannot but be fulfilled. Their month here was a foretaste of heaven for us missionaries, and is the greatest event Samoa will see until the Savior comes."

—*John Q. Adams*

SAMOAN MISSION PRESIDENT, 1920–1923;
Annual Mission Reports, 1921, Church Archives.

three, in front of the saddle or, more often, in her mother's arms!

Riding thus one day, on their way to Sauniatu, they found the streams so swollen by storms that they dared not attempt to ford them in the usual places, so concluded to go inland about a mile. With an unfaltering trust and a divine assurance that all would be well, with her heart responding to the tightening caresses of four little arms, the mother guided her horse over fallen trees, through a swamp in which he sank up to his sides in slime, and finally across the river—so deep even at that place that the horse nearly had to swim. In this same locality two men have since been caught in quicksand, and had to be rescued from their peril. . . .

"The welcome the natives give us," remarked Sister Adams assuredly, "their appreciation when we help them with their sick babies and children threatened with blindness, the knowledge we have of the eternal blessing [that] obedience to the Gospel will be to them, more than compensate for all our inconveniences and hardships."

Truly:

*They the royal-hearted
women are,
Who nobly love the noblest,
yet have grace
For needy suffering lives in
lowest place,
Carrying a choicer sunlight
in their smile
The heavenliest ray that
pitieh the vile.²*

Such "royal hearted" women are our lady missionaries. □



¹ Richard O. Cowan, "An Apostle in Oceania: Elder David O. McKay's 1921 Trip around the Pacific," in *Pioneers in the Pacific*, ed. Grant Underwood (Brigham Young University, 2005) 189–200.

² From George Eliot, *How Liza Loved the King* (1884).



PRAGMATISM & PROGRESS

Sister Missionary Service in the Twentieth Century

BY ANDREA RADKE-MOSS

President Thomas S. Monson's announcement in General Conference on Saturday, October 6, 2012, that young women can now serve missions at age 19 is no less than revolutionary. This move might seem like a pragmatic attempt to boost global missionary efforts. However, a brief historical overview of the last century's changes for sister missionaries provides some useful context for how remarkable this policy really is.

Nineteenth-century Mormon missionary service was almost exclusively male, with only small opportunities, here and there, for wives like Louisa Barnes Pratt and Lucy Woodruff Smith to serve as companions to their husbands. Estimates place the numbers of female "missionaries" at fewer than 200 during the entire 19th century.¹ A major shift occurred in 1898, when the Church called the first full-time proselyting single female missionaries,

Inez Knight and Jennie Brimhall. The Church needed female public representatives to counter persistent negative stereotypes about Mormon women, especially in the decade of the post-polygamy transition. Susa Young Gates recognized both the pragmatic and progressive virtues of missionary service for women:

"[I]t was felt that much prejudice could be allayed, that many false charges against the women of the Church could thus be refuted, while the girls themselves would receive quite as much in the way of development and inspiration as they could impart through their intelligence and devotion."²



By WW I, sister missionary numbers increased as males were called to military service, with the number of sisters peaking in 1918 at 38% of the total missionary force.³ During these early years, a sister's age and length of service depended upon her circumstances, but the minimum age for sisters generally held at twenty-three. During World War II, when missions closed and elders were called home, sister missionaries picked up some of the slack. The year 1945 was "the only year . . . in which sisters accounted for a majority of missionaries set apart."⁵

The post-War idealization of women's traditional roles reached deep into Mormon culture as well, with renewed emphasis on early marriage. Church mission policy reflected this return to domesticity. In 1951, the minimum age for sisters was officially set at twenty-three, perhaps largely to encourage earlier marriages. President David O. McKay introduced this policy change in the following way:

"It is surprising how eagerly the young women and some married women seek calls to go on missions. We commend them for it, but the responsibility of

proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ rests upon the priesthood of the Church. It is quite possible now, in view of the present emergency, that we shall have to return to the standard age for young women, which is twenty-three."⁶

Jessie Embry has calculated that while there was a small increase in the percentage of sister missionaries during the Korean War, "yet the raw number of sister missionaries actually fell over the same period."⁷ Another swing occurred in 1964, when the Church dropped the official age for sister missionaries back to 21, a change that proved crucial when some wards were limited to only one elder per year during the Vietnam War. Overall, female numbers increased again for a time, but by the 1970s, cultural changes had given rise to anti-sister stereotypes like the "unmarriageable Old Maid," especially as conservative gender expectations pushed back against the feminism and social changes of the 1960s and 1970s counterculture. The popular Mormon musical, *Saturday's Warrior* (1973), reinforced notions that missions were male spaces and that women properly filled supportive roles as dutiful girlfriends waiting for their missionaries. A member-authored article in 1969 suggested, "One of the reasons why so few women are missionaries might be that their

first calling is to stay home and write to them.”⁸ Sisters on missions sometimes felt defensive. One sister wrote,

“It is such a privilege to take part in this work. Deep down I am a fighter and a warrior. I want to be in the midst of the battle for my God even though I am a woman and my primary concern is the home. To be here on the front lines of the battle is a great gift to me.”

And this: “Is there any reason why a sister missionary can’t be just as effective as a Heber C. Kimball or a Wilford Woodruff? I may not have the Priesthood, but my call is just as real as theirs.”⁹

Winning over male missionaries remained a challenge. One sister remembered, “In every area that we went into, one of our jobs would be to convert the elders to the fact that lady missionaries had a place in the mission field.”¹⁰ And an elder admitted that “When I entered the mission field, I subscribed to the widely held notion that sister missionaries were a flaky lot who had been unable to find husbands and who could make little contribution to ‘real’ missionary work.”¹¹ In 1971, the Church shortened the mission length for sisters to 18 months. Since then, Church leaders have maintained a unified position on sister missionary service, at once recognizing and complimenting those who serve while also reminding women of their first priority toward marriage and family. The two-year age difference between elders and sisters reinforced domestic expectations, keeping sisters at or below 20% of overall missionary numbers.

In recent years, attitudes about sister missionaries have certainly shifted, with more young women serving because of a “first choice,” rather than as a “fall-back” plan. And in an interesting role reversal from an earlier time, many young men have actually “waited for” their sister missionaries after completing their own missions. Indeed, being a



returned sister missionary is something of a badge of honor. And yet, problems have persisted on rare occasions, including the stereotyping of sister missionaries as somehow unmarriageable. Not so long ago, a friend of mine shared her mission plans with a ward member who responded, “Why would a pretty girl like you want to serve a mission?”

Seen in the context of shifting historical policies regarding sister missionary service, the 2012 age change sends a remarkably affirming message to young LDS women. The sheer numbers of women serving will hopefully minimize double standards or extreme labels assigned to women, including the “binary extremes . . . [of] ‘good sisters’ or ‘problem sisters.’”¹³ Further, a lower age for women effectively separates missionary service from historical anxieties over the marriage-ability of young women. Even though women are still not required to serve, the message is clear: sisters are not an addendum or afterthought; they are essential to the missionary program, even irreplaceable. There’s also an implied message that “We trust you sisters to work alongside elders of your same age without worrying about whether you will be distractions or temptations to one another.”

The age change puts missionary service for young women squarely on their road maps of major life milestones, even privileging “Mission” as a desirable step toward life preparation. Young women will have more opportunities for lessons about companionship, effective communication, conflict resolution, problem-solving, public speaking, more intense gospel study, doctrinal preparation, church governance, and leadership. As with previous historical changes in Latter-day Saint female missionary service, the 2012 age change has occasioned remarkable opportunities for young LDS women. As

they experience personal miracles and hone spiritual gifts through full-time missions, they will strengthen families in faith and Church activity for generations to come. □

1 Calvin S. Kunz, "A History of Female Missionary Activity in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1898," MA thesis, Brigham Young Univ. (1976).

2 Gates, quoted in Jessie L. Embry, "Oral History and Mormon Women Missionaries: The Stories Sound the Same," *Frontiers* 19:3 (1998), 172.

3 Tally S. Payne, "'Our Wise and Prudent Women': Twentieth-Century Trends in Female Missionary Service," in *New Scholarship on Latter-day Saint Women in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Carol Cornwall Madsen and Cherry B. Silver (2004), 128.

4 Payne 131.

5 Ibid.

6 McKay, quoted in Payne 131; Vella Neil Evans, "Woman's Image in Authoritative Mormon Discourse: A Rhetorical Analysis," Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Utah, (1985), 153–4.

7 Jessie L. Embry, "LDS Sister Missionaries: An Oral History Response, 1910–1970," *Journal of Mormon History* 23 (Spring 1997), 115–6.

8 Patty Jackson, "Do You Qualify for the Heavy-Wait Award?" *Improvement Era* (May 1969), 56.

9 Mary Virginia Clark Fisher, "Journal 1975–77," MS 16429 (microfilm), Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah. Entries for February 12 and 20, 1976.

10 Elaine C. Carter, "Oral History," transcription of interview by Rebecca Vorimo, June 30, 1994, LDS Missionary Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Lee Library, Brigham Young Univ., 16.

11 Quoted in Embry 131.

12 Radke and Cropper-Rampton 144.

13 Mary Ann Shumway McFarland and Tania Rands Lyon, "'Spiritual Enough to be Translated, But Too Heavy to Get Off the Ground': Stereotypes and the Sister Missionary," conference paper, New Scholarship on Latter-day Saint Women in the Twentieth Century, Provo, Utah, 20 Mar. 2004; copy in possession of the author; used by permission.

Over
22,000
sister missionaries
were serving at the
end of 2014.



1940 – TODAY

With the outbreak of **WORLD WAR II** several missions were closed and many elders returned home.

— **1945** marked a time in Church history when there were more sister missionaries than elders.

— **1950:** The first standard 'plan' was a set of six lessons that missionaries memorized word for word in the language of their respective missions, supplemented by flannelboard pictures.

— **1964: THE AGE REQUIREMENT** for sister missionaries changed from 23 to 21.

— **1971: THE MISSION LENGTH** for sisters dropped to 18 months.

During the mid-1900s departing missionaries were given a **FAREWELL TESTIMONIAL** often followed by a dance. Programs were printed, financial contributions were solicited, and refreshments were served.



— **2012, OCTOBER GENERAL CONFERENCE:** "I am pleased to announce that able, worthy young women who have the desire to serve may be recommended for missionary service beginning at age 19, instead of age 21."

—President Thomas S. Monson

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020

Sister Missionary

1946–48

BY ARDIS E. PARSHALL

What was it like to be a sister missionary in the post-World War II era? My aunt, Evelyn May Taylor, was such a missionary, serving in the Northern California Mission. She kept a journal and her mother carefully saved all the letters she wrote home. Evelyn herself took photos and kept the documentary odds and ends associated with her mission, allowing us to reconstruct the outward signs of missionary life and something of the interior meaning of that mission.

The first indication of mission preparation in her papers is the carbon copy of her temple recommend, issued on May 18, 1946. The reverse of the recommend lists the questions used at that date for determining worthiness. The candidate answered those questions in writing, over her signature.

Evelyn first went to the temple on June 6, 1946. She saved the small pink ticket that was pinned to her dress when she went to the temple—that pink card alerted temple workers that she was a first-time temple-goer who might need a hand from time to time. The same system was still used when I attended the temple in St. George in 1981.

Late in October, 1946, an envelope with a familiar return address—the Church Administration Building and a 3¢ stamp!—arrived with Evelyn's mission call, signed by President George Albert Smith.



"The ten days in the Mission home in Salt Lake were in themselves worth coming. I have never enjoyed anything so much, learned so much in such a short time. And time never went by so fast."

—NOV 29, 1946

The mission call was accompanied by three other documents: a form letter regarding missionary wardrobe, a form letter regarding medical issues, and a form letter asking for basic identifying and genealogical information about the missionary. Today, this last information is collected during the pre-mission phase and submitted by the missionary before she receives her mission call.

Today's missionaries are discouraged from having any more show in their home wards than simply speaking at church before their departure. For many years in the middle of the 20th century, departing missionaries were given a "farewell testimonial" often followed by a dance. Programs were printed, financial contributions were solicited, and refreshments were served.

At some point in her preparation, Evelyn purchased a blank book to be used as a missionary journal. The journal does not cover her mission preparations; the first entry was made as she traveled between Salt Lake City and San Francisco.

Most missionaries purchased cards with the Articles of Faith printed on one side and a view

of Temple Square, with the missionary's name and addresses, to use as business cards during their missions.

Training in the Salt Lake Missionary Home lasted for two weeks. A printed program outlines the activities of missionaries-in-training.

A group photograph of the missionaries at the home was taken on Tuesday of the first week. Each missionary was given a print of that photograph.

Such group photographs were printed in the *Improvement Era*, with captions identifying each missionary. At the conclusion of her training in the Missionary Home, Evelyn received her missionary certificate, signed by all three members of the First Presidency: George Albert Smith, and his counselors J. Reuben Clark, Jr. and David O. McKay. □

FAREWELL TESTIMONIAL

in honor of

EVELYN M. TAYLOR

*prior to her departure
for the*

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA
MISSION

TWENTY-SIXTH WARD
CHAPEL

Come 9th West and 7th South

THURSDAY EVENING
NOVEMBER 14, 1946
8:00 P.M.

VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS



EVELYN M. TAYLOR
Missionary

Missionaries in the Field

William G. Stoud	Western States
Engene V. Flowers	North Central States
Elder J. Smith	Texas Louisiana
Cathryn E. Carlson	Northwestern States
Willard M. Fink	North Central States
Howard L. Marchant	California

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS
OFFICE OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

October 16, 1946

Miss Evelyn May Taylor
865 Arapahoe Avenue
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Sister Taylor:

It is a great compliment to be chosen as a trustworthy representative of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The Lord has said:

"The voice of warning shall be unto all people,
by the mouths of my disciples whom I have chosen
in these last days."

"And they shall go forth and none shall stay them,
for I the Lord have commanded them."

You have been recommended by the Bishop of your Ward and by the President of your Stake as being worthy to represent the Church as one of its missionaries.

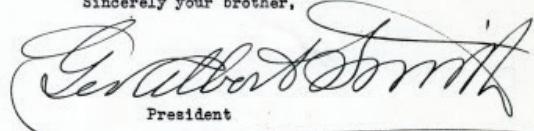
Believing that you will do your utmost to merit this recommendation and ever strive to be an honorable and devoted Latter Day Saint, we now extend to you an official call to labor as a missionary in the Northern California Mission.

Prior to your leaving for the mission field, you will receive important instructions at the Missionary Home located at 31 North State Street, Salt Lake City. You will be expected to report at 9:00 a.m. on November 18, 1946.

Will you please send us a letter, endorsed by your Bishop, indicating whether you are willing to accept this call and assuring us that you are in harmony with the standards and ideals of the Church, including the keeping of the Word of Wisdom, honesty in your dealings with your fellowmen, and that you are in all respects morally clean and upright.

We are happy to send this call to you, knowing what excellent opportunities and blessings will be yours in the successful accomplishment of serving the Lord as a missionary.

Sincerely your brother,


George Albert Smith
President

Program



Opening Song . . . Choir and Congregation

Invocation Paul Whitaker

Vocal Solo (a and b) . . . Marie Madson

Piano Solo (a and b) . . . Carole Taylor

Selection (a and b) Choir

Reading (a and b) Alice Mead

Organ Solo (a and b) . . . Godfrey Jacobs

Selection (a and b) . . . The Bowery Boys
Dale Hanks, Arwell Campbell, Richard Wood,
Earl Lloyd, George Denos

Violin Solo (a and b) . . Alvin Wallshleger

Remarks Bishop Wm. W. Horne

Response Missionary

Closing Song . . . Choir and Congregation

Benediction Emma Frenett

DANCING
Music by Penrose Dance Orchestra

"And the voice of warning shall be unto
all people, by the mouths of my disciples,
whom I have chosen in this last day."

"And they shall go forth and none shall
stay them, for I the Lord have commanded
them."

—D. & C. Sec. 14:3.

See more online by Ardis E.
Parshall, "Sister Missionary,
1946-48" at
www.keepapitchinin.org

By Maurine P. Smith, President

What a wonderful adventure to read and learn more about the introduction and growth of sister missionaries in the LDS Church. We Daughters know that great things are not achieved without our help. How would the West have been won without women? How would California, Oregon, or Great Salt Lake City have been settled without the women? Men led and explored the way; women made those places home. The Church needed the women missionaries to validate what the men were preaching; the Gospel is truly for the whole family. Too often, through the years, women have underestimated their contribution and influence in the development of our community.

I am particularly pleased to see the story about Elizabeth Claridge McCune. DUP's October 2015 lesson was on the McCune Mansion, and Alfred and Elizabeth McCune. Let me share just a little bit of her story that was not covered in the Matthew S. McBride article. Quoting from our lesson by Mary-anne Jensen, "Upon the family's return to Utah (from Europe), they moved into the Gardo House. They rented it from the Church for \$150.00 a month while they built a

home of their own on Arsenal Hill (now Capitol Hill).

"Word of Elizabeth's success in London had drawn the attention of Church authorities and she was called to the LDS Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association General Board. In that position, in 1899, she represented the Church at the International Congress of Women in London. At the conclusion of the Congress, participants were invited to have an audience with the Queen. When the Queen learned there was a Mormon present, she requested to meet her. Queen Victoria told Elizabeth she was interested in the Mormon beliefs and asked her about them, whereupon Elizabeth bore her testimony and explained Gospel principles. Elizabeth McCune was given a lovely Royal cup and saucer gift as remembrance of the tea at Windsor Castle. It is on display at our Pioneer Memorial Museum.



"Elizabeth was not without a sense of humor. While serving as a guide on Temple Square, she encountered a gentleman who was quite haughty and questioned her about the living conditions of the typical Mormon woman in an ordinary home. Elizabeth was able to convince him to go home with her so he could see for himself how a typical Mormon lived. She was, after all, a typical Mormon who lived in an ordinary house. Imagine his surprise when she brought him to the McCune Mansion!" What a great missionary!

"Sisters" now comprise the Temple Square Mission. On occasion, the Mission President will request to have their Zone Conference at our Museum. We are always pleased to share our facility with these outstanding women and at the same time, they are able to peruse the museum and learn a little more about our Utah history from the artifacts themselves. We have an amazing collection of manuscript histories and photos of the Pioneer Period. We would like to invite all of you to share some time with these pioneers at our museum at 300 North Main in Salt Lake City or any of our satellite museums throughout Utah, Idaho, Nevada and Wyoming. □

SISTER MISSIONARY VIGNETTES

Compiled by Susan Lofgren



Eastern States Missionaries, October 1921–December 1923. Front row, L to R: Sister Stella Richards, Mission President George William McCune, Sister Arta Priscilla Mathews. Back row: Sister Cary Martina Larsen Robinson, unidentified sister.

Cary Martina Larsen's "mission call was to the Eastern States and I remember some of the clothes she sewed in preparation. She left 26 May 1920. We took her down to Salt Lake in our Model T Ford. I remember how we looked forward to her letters. I think she went to New Haven, Connecticut, first. She sent us a picture from there wearing her black plush coat (which I loved) and her high heeled, high topped shoes. She also went to Bangor, Maine and Hoboken, New Jersey and New York City. . . .

"I remember she tried to teach us to serve meals the way they did in the East. All the plates were piled in front of the host or hostess and that person would dish up the food on the plate and then pass it down the line to the last person. We didn't continue this custom, however."

—Written by Cary's aunt, Nina L. Christensen (familysearch.org)



WESBORN

Nila Albrecht Carlson

grew up in Fremont, Utah, graduated from high school in 1933, and worked at a local store for a couple of years. Then "I decided I would like to go on a mission. I talked to the bishop about going. Of course, he was anxious to have me go. I think we'd had only one other girl in our town that had ever served a mission, so this was something special."

Carlson left for the North Central States Mission in October 1935.

(Cited in Jessie L. Embry, "LDS Sister Missionaries An Oral History Response," 1910–70, Journal of Mormon History 23:1 [Spring 1997], 122. Image from familysearch.org).



Amelia B. Carling was one of the first full-time, proselytizing sister missionaries in the Southwestern States Mission. She describes the sequence of her "appointment" in detail:

"While in Salt Lake City attending the General Conference in April 1901, I met Prest. James G. Duffin on the Tabernacle grounds on Sunday afternoon. . . . Prest. Duffin asked me 'how I would like to take a mission?' He stated that there was a nice work opening up in his mission for two lady missionaries.

"I told him I would very much like to go on a mission, that if I was qualified, nothing would give me more pleasure than being able to help in that great work.

"Well, of course I thought nothing of our little talk, any more than I wished that I was qualified and counted worthy to fill a mission, but I dismissed the thought from my mind as an impossibility. . . .

"The next Monday morning when Bro. Reynolds came I told him that Bro. Brimhall¹ had told me I was to have a talk with him about a mission.

"Well, said he, 'we only want to know if you will be willing to go, as you are wanted for that mission.' I told him yes, I was, if I was wanted, and he said 'Well that settles it, you will receive your appointment soon.'

"I can hardly describe my feelings. I felt thankful and sorry, a mixture of pleasure and pain.

"I had had for some time a longing to fill a mission, but never thought of such a thing as little 'me' being called on a mission. That sounded too big for me. It seemed like it would be someone who was better prepared than I; but nevertheless, I felt that if the Lord had a work that I could do I was willing and anxious to do it.

"Well, I was tried in my feelings severely before I received my appointment. I wrote to Papa about it and found that he was in such financial embarrassment that he was not able to furnish the necessary means so it was a little doubtful whether I should be able to go, on this account.

"I felt that the call was from the Lord, and that it would break my heart to have to refuse.

"I saw in this trial the fulfillment of Nephi's words when he said that the Lord never calls on us to do anything except he will open the way for us to do it, if we are humble and put our trust in Him.

"Well, satisfactory arrangements were made and my appointment was made to leave Salt Lake City on the 26th of June."

Information cited from Edje Jeter "Southwestern States Mission: Calling a Missionary," and "Southwestern States Mission: The Mission Call of Sister Amelia B Carling" at juvenileinstructor.org.

¹ The account is undated but occupies the first five pages of her mission diary. Sister Carling was living in Provo at the time. "Bro. Brimhall" is probably George H. Brimhall, acting President of Brigham Young Academy and father of Lucy Jane ("Jennie") Brimhall Knight, one of the first two single sister missionaries; "Bro. Reynolds" is George Reynolds, secretary to the First Presidency.

Josephine Booth was the seventh single sister missionary. "She served in Glasgow, Scotland, from 1899 to 1901, and in her journal she recorded challenges she faced acting as an ambassador not only for the Church but specifically for Mormon women." See Matthew S. McBride, "Josephine Booth: Sister Missionary to Scotland," *Ensign*, August 2016, 62–7. □



Top: Josephine Booth, just prior to her departure as a missionary. Below, far right: Josephine is sitting next to Eliza Chipman, one of her missionary companions.

LETTER OF APPOINTMENT.

SISTER Josephine Booth

BELOVED SISTER:

This is to certify that you are appointed to labor in
the Scottish Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints, under the direction of the President of that Conference.

It is your duty to preach the Gospel, and assist your President in discharging any duties which he may require of you, for the welfare of the cause where you are appointed to labor.

Dear Sister, keep the commandments of God, honor the covenants you have made with the Lord, observe the counsels of those who are placed over you; live pure, be humble and prayerful, resist temptation, eschew the very appearance of evil, that the Holy Spirit may accompany your administrations; that the power of your calling may increase upon you; the hearts of the people be opened that they may receive your testimony and minister to your necessities; and then you will be instrumental, in the hands of God, of accomplishing much good, and shall see the results of your labors made manifest.

Flatte, D. Lyman

James L. McMurin

Henry W. Daribith

Presidency of the European Mission of the Church
of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

42 Islington, Liverpool, July 1st 1899

Josephine Booth's letter of appointment to serve in the Scottish Conference during her mission to Great Britain in 1899–1901.



*“Whenever I had
the pleasure of
listening to one of [the
lady missionaries]
bear testimony to the truth of
the Gospel, and talk of their
Utah sisters, and defend the
women of Mormondom, I felt
their words were far more
convincing than anything that
could be said by the men. . . .
I believe there is room for a
good many sisters to do
effective missionary service.”*

—ELDER JOSEPH W. MCMURRIN,
(1858–1932) of the Seventy, “Lady
Missionaries,” *Young Woman’s
Journal*, December 1904, 539–40.

Oval: Sister Josephine Booth, seventh single sister missionary, 1899; see page 48. Above: Sister Thurza A. Tingey Adams served with her husband in Samoa, 1919; see page 34. Below: Rachel Pyne Duffin served two missions with her husband Cyril: Great Britain, 1912, and California, 1951; see familysearch.org.

